

# **TERRA INCOGNITA: A symbolic mythical journey**



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## **Key Words**

Practice-led Research

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Symbol

Child Archetype

Union of Opposites

Active Imagination

Sand play

Painting

Artist Books

Installation

Narrative

Hermeneutic

Rites of Passage

## Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the work itself.

QUT Verified Signature

Signature

October 2015

Date

## Abstract

*Terra Incognita* is a practice-led investigation examining my lived experiences in the transition from child to adult. The use of an Intuitive method of enquiry has enabled me to explore the symbolic and archetypal nature of my psyche to create an explorative and experimental body of work that is cross-disciplinary and transformational.

My creative practice, used in the context of a rite of passage considers how the psyche gives birth to a symbolic language, giving shape to the unknowable, enabling empowerment and manifesting as an iconography of the *Self* on multidimensional levels.

My practice is informed by Jung's notions of *Self*, Archetype and Alchemy; Campbell's elucidations of Mythologies, in particular the hero's journey of self-discovery; and Vygotsky's notions of the social technique of emotion and aesthetic catharsis. Examining the work of practitioners such as Joseph Beuys, Ken Unsworth and Parastou Forouhar has helped to inform and consolidate my processes and aesthetic decision-making.

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## ***There was a child went forth***

By

Walt Whitman

*There was a child went forth every day;*

*And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became;*

*And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,  
or for many years or stretching cycles of years.*

*The early lilacs became part of this child.*

*The grass and white and red morning-glories  
and white and red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,*

...

*These became part of that child who went forth everyday and who  
now goes, and will always go forth every day. (Whitman 2015)*

### **Research Question: *There was a child went forth...***

The research project addresses the quandary of confronting energies of my 'living myth' based on my formative experience of child to adult transition. How do I express the transformation of these experiences? What expressive forms can my inner language take?

In essence, how can my practice-led research use an Intuitive Methodology to enable and empower Jung's 'miraculous child' archetype, as a rite of passage.

# The Quest for Transformation

## Introduction

*He looked at his own Soul  
With a Telescope. What seemed  
All irregular, he saw and  
Shewed to be beautiful  
Constellations; and he added  
To the Consciousness hidden  
Worlds within worlds*

– COLERIDGE, Notebooks (Memories, Dreams & Reflections (Jung 1989)

This thesis intuitively explores, through practice-led research, contrasting experiences of my transitions of youth.

It traces the tensions associated with these residue experiences and the transformations that unfold throughout the phases of my research. Stradbroke Island was the place that held my earliest memory and experiences of childhood and my source of aesthetic and spiritual inspiration.

Point Lookout, at Stradbroke Island off the coast at southeast Queensland, where my family holidayed, was a remote outpost – there was no electricity, few dwellings and few locals. It was a place of natural beauty and wonder that provided a rich environment for learning local folklore, fostering my imagination through adventure, high-spirited behaviour, and the reinforcing of how I perceived the world through my connectedness to nature.

As a child and adult, my connectedness to nature is an awareness of the waxing and waning of the rhythms and cycles of activity, between the elements of nature such as air, fire, earth and water. The spontaneous sequencing and extreme scope for the natural elements to be played out in the outer environment paralleled the spontaneity between my emotions and senses and fueled my imaginative inner world. I felt at 'one' and encompassed by nature and that I was being 'held' by a spiritual presence greater than myself. This was my first experience of the sublime in Nature. This fed

my natural curiosity in people and all living things and thus I defined myself through person, place and spiritual connection. For me the natural environment afforded 'hands on' embodied, experiential learning without impositions and restrictions.

Returning to the mainland after these experiences proved to be both perplexing and disempowering. At Point Lookout I lived freely, using intuition to negotiate the dangers of youthful indiscretions. Upon my return to 'normal society', I found its rules, regulations and restrictions difficult and challenging and the jolt of the contrast manifested rebellious behavior. However I used art as a way to express both the joy and the frustration. The dominant culture of family and school life, manifested the challenges, as the focus was only on the cognitive levels of understanding and meaning making. I found this inadequate for the way I experienced the world for my *self*-definition. There was a lack of multileveled diverse contexts and systems to provide, through my natural modes of meaning making such as intuition, play, story and imagination, a conduit for my experience of mediation between body, mind and spirit.

My frustration stemmed from the dominant culture of learning and worldview, as it was forced and restrictive. This occurred at a time when as a transitioning adolescent I was searching intensely for a meaningful personal, emotional and spiritual connection within a dominant community for meaning. Art making was my subversive tool. I was adversely asserting choice about my own learning and defining myself, both worldly and spiritually within the context of the natural world to which I was drawn.

Intuition and emotion were my primary avenues of expression during my journey to adulthood. This way of processing experiences was not understood or often accepted in the dominant culture of family and school.

Whitmont (1969, 155) argues that "one's type begins to develop long before the capacity for understanding arises...". "It is not the type, that is the result of understanding but the premise of orientation and this is the lens with which we approach experience and that we perceive the reality peculiar to ourselves".

According to Whitmont (1969, 155) children who exhibit these tendencies may find themselves misunderstood and can be easily deflected and mould their functionality

to adapt to the dominant culture which is not authentically their own. My natural 'lens' was and still is, predominantly the senses, symbolic intuition, and imagination, which therefore needs and desires multidimensional levels for meaning making. I subjugated my authentic way of orientating my experiences in connecting to my dominant cultural community, thereby constructing a 'surface self' with which to make meaning both in my work and arts practice.

These processes, challenges and experiences became the foundations of my creative practice. The relevance of my arts practice and research for me on reflection is that I can see how practice-led research with its many layers and contexts, acts as a mirror and a conduit to create a psychological and spiritual world for the integration of my psyche.

As an artist, I pursue my aesthetic intuitive processes to identify a symbolic iconography with which to express and make visible my 'living myth' in all its transitional forms.

I utilise the arts practice to map and explore my personal phases and the inner psychological terrain of a disempowering 'living myth'. Through making two- and three-dimensional forms, I address phases of disempowerment and empowerment, throughout my journey.

Investigations on qualitative methodology such as Schwandt (1998) and transpersonal research methods such as Intuitive Inquiry (Braud and Anderson 1998) validate my primary mode of working and processing in this research.

Experiments in sand play prior to practice-led research led to my exploration of Jungian psychological frameworks. My interest in fairy tales and myths that fertilised my imaginative, emotional and creative expression as a child, led to an interest in Carl Jung's perspectives on the inward exploration of the transformative symbol-making creative unconscious and psychological processes of the inner *Self*. Simultaneously, I juxtapose Lev Semenovich Vygotsky's perspective on creativity, which focuses on cognitive psychological processes and the symbolic art form as a social and cultural interactive process.

Jung's perspectives on the inward journey include the process of alchemy, where archetypal energies and mythological imagination evoke symbolic images from the creative unconscious. It is from these elements and processes, which, according to Jung are a common link to all mankind, (Hyde and McGuiness 1992) that the spiritual domain is activated.

Vygotsky's theory of creativity supports and emphasises emotion, catharsis and aesthetic response as a social and cultural tool. This tool of emotion, catharsis and in particular art, he claims is the "mediator and organiser" of a diverse system of contexts and symbols "between one person and their community.... bringing intimate and personal aspects of our being into the cultural circle" (Vygotsky in Moran 2010, 142). These tools and concepts are embedded in the contexts of everyday life and grounded in artistic material (Moran 2010, 142). This theoretical notion relates to my practice as a social interactive tool to engage the audience's emotion and imagination and the idea of the lived experience through play and self-narrative (Connery, John-Steiner and Marjanovic-Shane 2010).

The aspect of play as stated by (Vygotsky in Connery *et al.* 2010, 12), is an expression of meaning making, both individual and collaborative across diverse contexts and codes. Play is complex – for the child or adult, it's a way of self-realisation where they confront self-perceptions and fears that threaten and provide tensions, which allows for construction of an imaginary situation whereby perceptions and values are challenged and future intentions and possibilities are created.

Within this very personal and fragile safe space, personal values can be aired, thwarted and re-assigned/reconstructed (Ferholt 2010, 176-177).

The aspect of narrative is built into the play, through fantasy and interactive dialogue with cultural others or self dialogue as a self-defining tool. The context of the narrative influences innate pattern recognition by relating "new experiences to old patterns" and thus completing the gaps. (Hartley 2009). Therefore narrative and play can co-ordinate and make "visible the complex and dynamic relationships between emotion, intuition, cognition, imagination", *perezhivanie*, (an 'intensely-emotional-lived-through-experience') and the creative outcome (Ferholt 2010, 164-165).

In essence, Vygotsky emphasises that it is the social and cultural framework that influences the individual's inner alignment, transcendence of the social, cultural, political framework and transformation, through creative means of symbols. However, Jung emphasised that individuals must locate through their own creative approach and the identification of personal symbols that align their inner world. This inward location in turn leads to transcendence of time and space outside the political, cultural framework, ensuing in transformation and acceptance of *self* and others.

Herein lay a conundrum with which I was confronted with in relation to these theoretical frameworks throughout the life span of my project. Influenced by my natural intuitive 'lens' and the 'lived' experience of my transition in early years, the differing of these two theoretical frameworks contradict each other.

Vygotsky's proposal that the social cultural framework is what impacts and influences the inner and outer alignment of the individual. Whereas Jung's notion is that it is the image mythmaking unconscious that drives the alignment through a psychological and spiritual dimension of the individual's inner and outer worlds. It is this process that drove my practice beyond its previous boundaries.

Vygotsky and Jung both agree on the importance of the symbolic value of art, for the alignment of inner and outer worlds that results in a catharsis or a totality of Self. They also agree that emotion and imagination are crucial to creativity (Lindqvist 2010).

I acknowledge Vygotsky's emphasis on the external influences of his identified social and cultural framework of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which he claims is embedded in the dominant culture. Vygotsky states that ZPD acts as a catalyst to meaning making and catharsis and that the social/cultural interaction of these conscious emotional patterns sets off the imagination, thereby creating meaning making through play and imagination.

I can also appreciate Jung claims that it is the myth making, imaginative, non-aware or innate part of *Self* of the psyche that drives our creativity and self-discovery to make new meaning beyond cultural context. For Jung it is the archetypal energies, which thrust abstracted, innate images manifested by the mythical imagination into



emotional consciousness and thus the archetypal energies can be grounded in conscious symbolic art forms.

What Jung's framework provides that Vygotsky's does not, is emphasis on the spiritual *Self*. In essence, the deeper spiritual mystical and collective knowledge held by the archetypal energies of the individual, holds the key for transcendence of the eternal truth.

This spiritual *Self* I found in its connectedness to nature at Point Lookout, Stradbroke Island during the transition of my early years is akin to indigenous spirituality as (Grieves 2008, 364) describes in her article:

*...indigenous spirituality derives from a philosophy that establishes the wholistic notion of the interconnectedness of elements of the earth and the universe, animate and inanimate, whereby people, the plants and animals, landforms and celestial bodies are interrelated. How this interconnectedness exists and why it is important to keep all things in healthy interdependence is expressed an encoded in sacred stories or 'myths'.*

I became aware of my own interconnectedness, in the stories of my early transition, as Grieves describes, not only the indigenous encoding of interconnectedness in sacred stories or "myths", but also in the rituals of journeying to Stradbroke Island and my early transitional rite of passage.

'This is a philosophy that regards man and nature as a corporate whole' (Elkin as quoted in Grieves 2008, 369).

By considering these two theoretical approaches, as a framework for leading to *Self* discovery on various levels is further enhanced and validated by Ute Eickelkamp's (2007) comparative studies of sand play. Eickelkamp conducted comparative studies of Australian Aboriginal children's sand play in two different contexts, such as traditional storytelling in the sand in central and western desert regions and the other in an artificial individualised setting as an intervention in a Tiwi Island community.

"Symbolisation", Eickelkamp suggests "is a special form of imagination which unified different modalities of representing experience". These studies revealed two different

schema involved in sand play for imagination and lived experience in a natural social setting and an individualised setting. She concludes that while both lend themselves to self-directed play, the social context, creativity and self-expression is more theatrical and symbolism is bound by culture, with interjection from peers and adults (Eickelkamp 2007, 46). However she concludes that in the individualised context – it is protected from the play being challenged by peers or adults, even though the objects are already formed and not created by them, they are free to act out and create personal fantasies.

She further conjectures that even though the two forms of sand play trigger different aspects of “symbolisation” each in its own way has an integrative effect and both create a link between intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences (Eickelkamp 2007).

In this study, I propose that it is the simultaneous use of Jung and Vygotsky’s frameworks that lead to self-discovery on various levels consolidating *Self* and in the transactive process brings social and cultural understanding through interaction, discourse between myself, the creative works and my peers and audience. This is resolved through ongoing process of response to my inner and outer worlds, raised in meditative and reflexive practice, ongoing audience response and the expanding and repositioning of the work throughout the study resulting in alignment of *Self* and my interpretation of how I align myself with others.

Tacey (2012, 230) points out that Jung’s well-established theoretical frameworks are still relevant to our contemporary Western culture today, which seems to have relegated its focus to the material ideologies, dismissing the inner spiritual world of the psyche, to the realm of fantasy.

My methodology is intuitive and the latitude this approach brings has led to multilayered and cross-disciplinary processes. My intuitive enquiry involves interconnecting processes through different intuitive criteria, where the *Self* and practice are in a simultaneous circular dance involving positive and negative archetypal energies and imagination. This circular dance is a search for inner alignment and results in symbolic art forms that inform my quest for spiritual meaning.

The images from the creative unconscious are, as Michael Vannoy Adams describes, non-ego images, that is, images that contain deep inner knowledge not yet consciously understood. Adams argues that the function of non-ego images is to present to the conscious, images for integration. These images engage the conscious in dialogue, causing tension as the conscious alternates between trying to dominate and trying to establish trust (Adams 2013).

I address this tension when I am reclaiming the spiritual and miraculous child in finding resolution through states of play, art-making and self-discovery. By conceiving and making artworks, I have made revelatory connections between my conscious *self* and a deeper nature of my 'being', or spiritual 'inner centre' as expressed by Jung (Jung 1978).

Von Franz (Jung 1978) gives an example of the indigenous *Self* that directly correlates to this inner guiding factor or inner centre in my practice-led research. She states: "...the Naskapi Indians in eastern Canada who live in isolated groups in the wilderness...have had to develop their inner voice or what they call their soul as an inner companion or Great Man " They believe this dwells in the heart. She develops this idea further: "The Naskapi pay attention to what Jung calls their unconscious *Self* or inner voice trying to find meaning and testing their inner truth, therefore entering into a deeper connection with the Great Man." (Von Franz 1978, 162)

The process of revealing the inner centre to the conscious *Self*, is what Jung calls individuation and he aligns this with the process of alchemy (Jung 1978). By exploring my inner centre through the individuation process, I have experimented with the properties of the Jungian projection technique and Zoja's levels of expression found in sand play methods. These enabled me to explore my different psychological states and expand the material nature and form of my practice across disciplines and accounts for conscious shifts in perception.

These conscious shifts came about whilst working between two-dimensional forms such as paintings and three-dimensional forms such as my artist books and installations. These shifts, which occurred at different phases of the practice, exposed implicit, tacit knowledge that contributed to the continuous ephemeral cycle of significant life and creative experiences.

The most potentially significant outcome is the creation of new and innovative art forms.

Contemplating my research project, undoubtedly my childhood experiences influenced my discourse around disempowerment, empowerment and inner *Self* and lived experience, however interest in different spiritual beliefs and teaching adolescents have also contributed to my interpretative paradigm. Working as a teacher in art and expressive ways, I have sought through these interpretative paradigms to nurture inner resilience and explore, accept and support individual differences and ways of learning. These vocations have, for a time, satisfied my sense of inequity that I felt as a child. As a consequence of these influences, intuition became a hidden, heightened sense for survival for 'living on the surface'.

In Chapter 1 Part I, I consider the context of experience, reflexivity and meaning making as found in my practice-led research. I consider different perspectives of Jung and Vygotsky psychological theories and their frameworks of creativity, transformational change and self-discovery.

I use these theoretical frameworks as well as the framework of sand play to examine my lived experience and what I like to call my 'living myth', and how they contribute in different ways to my process of giving symbolic form to the conflicting emotional inner language of child archetype.

I examine specifically Jung's theory of the psychological elements of the psyche, the *Self*, archetype and mythological imagination and his interpretation of process of individuation/alchemy as a creative process. I consider how these elements and processes interact aesthetically with my work and mythological dimensions of my experience.

Alternatively, I examine Vygotsky's theories of creativity, specifically the aesthetic response and catharsis, the influence of social and cultural interactive transactions of the symbol through play and narrative and how this contributes to transformations within my practice and implications for the audience.

In Chapter 1, Part II, my research also examines how various artists use similar two- and three-dimensional art forms, who work with concepts that relate to nature,

psychological and spiritual transformations and aesthetically how they represent their inner spiritual and psychological worlds of symbols. I focus specifically on the artwork of John Martin, John Everett Millais, Julie Chen, Juli Haas, Joseph Beuys, Ken Unsworth and Parastou Forouhar to examine how they portray struggles of inner conflict and how their works relate to mine.

These artists' work in a diversity of forms, ranging from 2D to 3D sculpture and installation and they mirror the multidimensional levels of my journey. John Martin and Everett Millais use the representational image to portray the spiritual and sublime. Their work initially gave voice to the powerful emotions needing to be released and a way of connectedness to the universe beyond my family and culture.

The work of Chen and Haas provide further insight into the presentation of the abstract form, and a way of presenting the ambiguous psychological layering of images and form, creating mystery and use of the sculptural inner space of the form to offer different perspectives and highlight the mysterious feminine.

Installation artists Beuys, Unsworth and Forouhar all highlight the role of the artist as a transformer of experience, through their own transitional experience and art forms. All three use space and object and material for cross purposes, intentionally creating a sense of ritual, displacement and imbalance to evoke extreme emotional responses within the viewer.

In Chapter 2, I describe my practice-led methodology, outlining the multiple multi-layered methods and its relevance to this research. I outline Anderson's notion of intuitive criteria and the role it plays in relation to Jungian concept of mythological imagination, methods of sand play and symbolic images within the creative practice. I examine the significance of the hermeneutic phases of research and intuitive criteria as diagrammatically represented by methods of triangulation and a heuristic spiral. I then outline the methods and examine how they relate to critical events in my practice.

In Chapter 3, I track, analyse and appraise briefly the critical experiments, events and phases of my studio developments – specifically the preliminary exhibitions of 2011 and the pilot exhibition of 2013 – and how they contributed to the final exhibition outcomes. I then discuss my processes and concepts in my final exhibition

*Terra Incognita: A Symbolic Mythical Journey*, considering theoretical influences, artists' practices and highlights of my creative journey.

I conclude by summarising my findings and the importance of my intuitive methods and practice-led research and the personal and collective experience of my research journey.

# CHAPTER ONE: Contextual Review

## Part 1: Theorists

*“The biggest lesson that life itself can be led as a work of art. In doing so the maker himself or herself is remade. This remaking, this re-creation is at the heart of the process of education”* (Eisner as quoted in Smith 2005).

## Practice-led Theories

The importance of a practice-led approach is that it allows flexibility of intuitive investigations and interpretations of my personal ‘living myth’. Theorists such as Dewey, Schon and Eisner have provided frameworks for the reflexivity of experience and the lived experience. They suggest that through the reflexive actions of metaphorical and aesthetic thinking that tacit knowledge is revealed and this can be used as a critical tool for innovative directions in the arts practice.

Eisner further suggests that the notion of creativity and aesthetic thinking in arts practice is part of the transformative process of heightening *Self*-awareness both on a personal and collective level. I found these notions a useful backdrop, to my search for self-knowledge and meaning of ‘being’ as I relate to the world.

## Perspectives of Jung and Vygotsky

Both theoretical conceptual frameworks of Vygotsky and Jung are significant in their different roles and applications within my practice.

Whilst themes of self-knowledge; transformations and symbolic forms are common to both, their perspectives on how the processes of emotion, imagination and the function of the symbol differ.

Jung’s analysis of the elements of the psyche offered me a way of reflectively processing deep self-knowledge. Jung suggests that it is the knowledge potential and possibilities of symbolic images manifested by the creative unconscious through the process of individuation or alchemy that informs self-discovery of a spiritual nature.

Vygotsky, in his investigations of theories of creativity and themes of transformation and self-discovery, emphasises how emotion and imagination are influenced significantly by play and narrative. He suggests they are consensually governed by the extrinsic direction of socially and culturally embedded framework of the Zone of Proximal Development. (Connery *et al.* 2010). Thus, in effect, play and narrative is mirrored through social and cultural symbolic interchange.

“He acknowledges the importance of the lived experience to these cognitive processes, and how we learn subjectively through life events” (Moran 2010, 143). He stresses it is these social cultural elements of play, narrative and lived experience, in conjunction with the artist’s “unique inner processes” of the cognitive elements and the embodiment of these inner processes in symbolic forms, that mediates this embodied knowledge through the symbol in a social, interactive way with the audience. He claims that it is through this interaction that gives rise to tensions which are resolved in innovative ways often “providing original possibilities for future directions” (Connery *et al.* 2010, 13), and makes visible a cathartic response. This, in turn, brings the artist’s inner world into alignment with his or her cultural and social context through the symbolic artifacts (Connery 2010, 18). He further suggests that this interplay of social and cultural aspects and aesthetic processes that impact on artist and audience alike, can bring about change (Moran 2010, 144).

In essence, Vygotsky claims – (as quoted in Connery 2010, 19) – the artist or artists “...construct new knowledge from both the primary cultural circle from which it originated, as well as the secondary cultural context in which it is experienced. He views the aesthetic response as intra and interpersonal.”

Jung’s approach and conceptual framework of the *creative middle way* (Martin 1955) or individuation process, highlights intuition and non-directive processes that bring about spiritual and metaphysical transformational changes in self-discovery.

Jung explorations and investigations of *Self* transformation and self-discovery and the symbol, emphasise the influence of the deep inner processes of the psyche upon emotion and imagination that open up consciousness, beyond cultural and social influences, to the metaphysical and spiritual dimensions.



He emphasises that this embodied knowledge is manifested in symbolic images and forms. He suggests that it is the unconscious energies of the archetypes and personal mythologies that act upon emotion and intuition and that intuition is the bridge between these energies and assists with generating mythological imagination.

In other words the notion of transformation is not a cognitive cultural process as suggested by Vygotsky, it is a deeper more profound expression of *Self*-knowledge, “transmitted through the effect of the inward image making unconscious upon emotion and intuition” (Whitmont 1969, 34).

Jung maintains that it is the image making unconscious that carries both personal and collective meaning, and that it is the images or forms that are manifested that are symbolic, carrying with them the distinctive personal and collective qualities. These qualities present potential possibilities for transformation and self-discovery in a collective and spiritual way.

Whilst the difference in their approaches lies in the process of conscious cognitive versus unconscious non-directive, I have found both to be applicable in my practice. For example, in the creative process of making my *Digital Story*, which was a social and collaborative event, I found it to be a more conscious form of aesthetic transformation in that I achieved a deeper understanding of my ancestors, in a cultural sense, through the creative process. However, I did not achieve the spiritual or metaphysical transformation I was searching for.

Rose and Grainger suggest that when the autobiographical narrative ‘telling’ is involved, it is conscious and unable to identify the unconscious *Self*, because of the limitations of spoken language (Brushwood Rose and Granger 2013).

Nonetheless, I found both spiritual self-discovery and metaphysical transcendence in the non-directive processes of sand play. The non directive process of sand play provided me with the opportunities to suspend the critical consciousness of analysis, logic and cultural rules to allow the imagination to engage with my memories and myth and open up a relationship with the spiritual self. This process gives the time for a connection to the cosmos and opportunity for transformation of *Self* by allowing glimpses of the hidden sacred *Self* in images to be revealed through memory, the

collapse of time and space and thus evoking a metaphysical and ephemeral experience of transcendence outside time, space and culture.

In earliest art forms there is an intertwining between art and spirituality and the human experience, exploring and expressing the profound needs and beliefs of humanity around life and death connection to culture and the universe. These concepts are represented as a transcendent experience, and in visual forms throughout religious, cultural and individual artistic practices (Robertson and McDaniel 2006).

Contemporary arts practice in many ways is a vehicle for the purpose of exploring spiritual and metaphysical themes, questioning and challenging beliefs around identity, the sacred, the cosmos, and values of the human spirit (Robertson *et al.* 2006).

Shirazeh Houshiary is one such artist who seeks through the “imaginal realm that exists between body and spirit, transcendence as a goal, manifesting in her art, the progress of her pure and infinite vision of the soul” (“Shirazeh Houshiary: Turning Around the Centre” 1993).



**Figure 2:** Shirazeh Houshiary: *Turning Around the Centre*, lead and gold leaf, 1×1×1 m each, 1993; photo courtesy of the Lisson Gallery and the artist, Grove Art Online

*Turning around the Centre* (Figure 2) is an abstract installation of four cubes, each encased in lead, containing a “spinning square”, which suggests a circular motion implying it is the unification of heaven and earth. There is progression, increasing in ratio from the darkness of the lead to a full golden square where the work appears to radiate (Frampton 1996b, 176). Houshiary links the collective and the personal in her work, as she relates her Sufi beliefs of the spinning dance as a metaphor to the cosmic motion of the planets turning around the sun and of the intense progression of the dancer spinning around and around to “break free”, that is, to transcend and experience oneness, thus “unveiling the rapture of his true gold”. Houshiary states “the sculpture defines, in Sufi terms, the progress of the soul” (Frampton 1996b, 176).

I identified a resonance and a connection with her collection of works *Turning Around the Centre*, by the powerful and eloquent way her process and representation succeeds in resolving her infinite metaphysical goal of transcendence and representing the alchemy of the soul's journey. Her work serves to validate and consolidate the alchemy and the metaphysical goal of my spiritual journey in the manifestation and representation of my work, in particular my four artists books.

Through the making process of various art forms such as paintings, artist books and installations, and application of these non-directive processes of Sand play methods and approaches, I explore and investigate the elements of emotion, intuition and imagination primarily through the Jungian framework and elements of the *Self*; child archetype, the shadow, mythopoeic or mythological imagination and the notion of alchemy.

When I am involved in the experience of making an artwork, there is a simultaneous interplay of different aspects of the psyche and the unconscious processes as outlined above by Jung. In defining this process of indefinable experience in intellectual terms, I realised that I had to describe each part and how they corresponded in a complementary way to each other in the interweaving process.

Whitmont (1969, 34 35) suggests that these terms are “no more than code words to denote specific areas of symbolic experience, they are not the experience itself, nor are they fixed or definable. They are merely symbolic terms that pertain to an image, emotional and inner drives based on individual experience” and are the “best possible expression for something essentially unknown and unknowable”. They are used to “orientate the heuristic experience” and are to “describe the complimentary correspondence they have to each other” within the individual experience.

The symbolic forms thus appear as different levels of expression and interpretation of my psyche throughout the practice, thus heightening self-awareness.

## **Significance of the Symbol**

The significance of the symbolic form that defines its pertinence to this project is that the symbol resonates and draws towards it many ideas and possibilities, information and memories, which opens up multiple levels of meaning, thereby creating

multidimensional perspectives (in conversation with sand play therapist Marie Makinson on May 30, 2013). This process in turn opens up my practice to multiple levels of expression and possibilities such as symbols at different phases of the practice to reflect the material and images contained in the psyche. For example, in the initial stages, the visual metaphors established in the paintings provides the material and possibilities for symbolic discourse. Thus the realisation of symbolic discourse therefore eventually plays itself out in the progression of further work across different disciplines and art forms, culminating in installation practice.

## **Context of Jungian concepts and themes**

The central archetype of the psyche according to Jung is the *Self*. Jung terms *Self* as the 'inner centre' or guiding factor.

Jung proposed the concept of an aware *Self* is the goal of the psyche. He suggests that the achievement of totality of the psyche, conscious and unconscious requires the spiritual dimension (Pearson and Wilson 2001; Jung 1978).

Myss (1997, 169) describes the achievement of totality as the "Sacrament of Confirmation and it is the spiritual aspect of this achievement is *Self* respect". She suggests that this "sacrament symbolises the passage from childhood to adulthood, facing or will face experiences that reveal our inner strengths apart from the influences of our peers and elders".

It is this *Self* that Jung describes that experiences the metaphysical, through the spiritual dimension within my practice and I sometime refer to as the "deeper nature of my being".

As mentioned, the Jungian terms are used to orientate the heuristic experience and how they complement and correspond to each other within my practice.

An initial introduction to this process is through my experimentation with the sand play approach.

## Sand play process and Levels of Expression

Margaret Lowenfield and Dora Kalff, are sand play theorists who saw the inherent potential in the use of miniatures and free play as a way of 'laying out life for one's own introspection' and emotional self-discovery (Zoja 2011). Kalff furthered the process with incorporating sand and miniature figurines within the sand tray (Figure 3).



**Figure 3:** Susan Christie, *Sand play* – Collective Threads (2014)  
Collaborative space, sand and miniatures

In the sand-play process, there are non-directive and directive methods (Pearson *et al.* 2001). Non-directive is self-reflexive and meditative and directive method is an interactive process guided by another experienced person (Pearson *et al.* 2001).

The element of spirituality as in Jungian psychology is based on the archetypes and symbols. A meditative projection method or non-directive method is used with the figurines and the sand. The projection is revealed as an intuitive attraction to particular symbols or the tactility of the sand. The intuitive attraction is often 'felt' as a

bodily impression and is projected onto particular miniatures, which then become the symbols for the individual person or persons engaged in the play.

Eva Pattis Zoja is a contemporary sand play therapist who describes the process of choosing a concrete symbol and playing with it in the sand or creating a concrete form in the sand, grounds the individual experience in the neutral space of the sand tray (Zoja 2011, 22).

According to Kalff (2003) the arrangement of the sand bounded by the sandbox sets up a world that corresponds to his or her inner state. She describes that all the elements, the sand, the collection and the use of music, the contemplative atmosphere all bring forth a 'synchronistic' state. These elements suspend intellectual consciousness and open up different doorways to the psychic inner world to engage seemingly random memories, images and energies to be released and to come together in what Jung calls 'meaningful coincidences' expressed in outer world of sand play (Tacey 2012, 315). Sand is connected to the earth, body and memory and transports us back to childhood. Music with its patterns and rhythms and tonal structures connect much more instantaneously to human emotions, memories and ritualistic rhythms (Hansen n.d.). The miniatures engage the mythic imagination and simultaneously all the elements connect us to psychic forces beyond ourselves (Tacey 2012, 293).

Weinrib (1983) states that the sand play process brings forth a kind of psychological state of incubation or pregnancy. With any kind of incubation or pregnancy there are different stages of gestation. In sand play, Zoja has developed different levels of expression, which are evident at different stages of self-discovery. Zoja describes the levels of the conscious and unconscious as ranging from:

1. *The concrete or Literal Level – closest to the conscious level. Expressions are very literal and littoral (pertaining to the shore line).*
2. *Allegoric Level - the conscious level – for example, describing one subject under the guise of another” (Oxford Dictionary).*
3. *Symbolic Level – Unconscious level – use of a symbol it is a best possible expression of something that cannot be said and has the ability to project many meanings.*

4. *Presymbolic level – Unconscious level – This is the primordial level, where there are few symbols and few sand forms, but the individual experiences it and eventually creates a form and image in the neutral space of the sand, grounding the experience* (Fox 2012).

The levels are significant to my creative practice. They indicate and validate my natural methods of experiencing metaphysical revelations as numinous moments. The levels also provide an appropriate way to map the different levels of self-discovery or self-knowledge that has been applicable through my numerous processes.

The sand play methods, the tray, the miniature figurines, and levels of expression are particularly relevant to the birth of symbolic new art forms in my practice, specifically in the making of my artists' books. These processes and methods will be discussed in more depth in my Methodology (Chapter 2). The methods, the neutral form of the tray, the miniature figurines and levels of expression validate for me how inextricably linked my artwork and specifically my artists' books, is to my own psyche. The materials and process provide a safe space for the freedom and abandonment to occur. The process of my search for spiritual transcendence and resolution of my self-narrative through rituals of play and self-discourse manifests itself in my art forms.

(Please refer to Appendix E for sand play instructions associated with my sand play installations – *Personal and Collective Threads* – in my final exhibition.)

## **Miniature figurines as Symbols**

Aniela Jaffe suggests that everything can be of symbolic significance, such as natural or manmade objects, as well as abstract forms, for example, the square, the circle or the triangle (Jung 1978, 257).

Within my practice the collection of figurines is a connection to my inner world, as the collection is individualised and unique. Each choice of miniature symbol has a memory or experience or feeling that is attached to my interaction with that symbol.



Kalff identifies a broad cross-section of categories in miniature collections. She states that when creating a collection of miniatures, to choose those that represent both animate and inanimate beings in the external world, as well as in the inner imaginative world (Kalff 2003).

Hegeman (2001) concludes that the sand play miniature collection is personal. She describes how “Kaspar Kieppenheuer notes that the collection is autobiographical and not a recipe and that in choosing a collection that there are personal experiences, feelings and travels connected with those figures”.

She also indicates that the collection grows and changes as the individual does and “the question is not about what is in a collection? It is more of what’s gone into the building of the collection?”

The potential for the audience is the choice of figurines in my sand play installations, as the figurines are essentially neutral and have latent qualities to be brought to light within the context of the individual’s choices.

The context of all the elements in the Exhibition space, the figurines, the background music, the intimacy of the space, provide a synchronistic moment that assists the activation of meaning for the individual when they make their choices.

The significance of exploring and utilising sand play as one of my methods, was to discover the patterns of oppositional energies of my child archetype in a non-directive way and use my artwork to ground them. For example the positive and negative energies were more clearly defined through play and dialogue in the making process and expressed in the materials in various emotional values of colour and tone such as yellows, greens, aquas and the deep greens and blue blacks within the artworks.

## **The Child Archetype**

Jung’s concept of the child archetype in this practice is represented by the deep emotional energies such as the shadow or wounded aspect and the miraculous or magical aspects of the inner child. These deep energies are driven by the impact of my ‘living myth’ and the contexts within the practice that challenge my ‘living myth’.

Jung defined archetypes as primordial ideas or prototypes that belonged to part of the collective unconscious...only identifiable in images “which resides in all of us as a way of experiencing and fundamentally unites people from all cultures and nations” (Brun, Pedersen and Runberg 1993). (Brun *et al.* 1993). These original patterns of emotional energy known as archetypes are numerous and a part of the personal and collective unconscious of every individual. For example Myss states that ‘archetypes represent a fundamental learning experience or process that guides our lives’ (2001, 364). Myss designates names to but a few of many examples of archetypal patterns, such as the Warrior, the Queen, the Crone and the Mystic.

However she states that, “The child archetype is one of the four survival archetypes of the psyche and is one of the most powerful patterns in the psyche, as it is our first state of consciousness, new growth and new possibilities.” (Myss 2001, 106). It is this archetype’s energies that I explore as a way of revealing the divine child and connecting past, present and beyond, transforming thinking and practice.

Tacey (2012) in his analysis of Jung’s psychology of the child archetype raises these essential features. The child motif not only represents something of the past, but also exists within us in the present, in its effort to represent the ebb and flow of evolving life.

The child’s potential for the future, as representative of a child god or child hero as a symbol of a miraculous birth, also has the potential to be abandoned, or that side of one’s psyche that can be repressed. Tacey proposes that it is because this archetype is linked to the collective, it represents the possibilities, as it’s not yet integrated into the material world. The ‘hero’ child’s main feat is to overcome that monster of the darkness, the shadow aspect of the child archetype.

The significance of these opposing energies is that they create emotional tensions within the practice, which can produce a state of inertia, or liminal state, where there is a constant struggle for a resolution simultaneously in the psyche, as well as the creation of new images.

To assist, harness and express these emotional tensions throughout my practice, music, intuitively chosen, is played during the making of new materials and symbolic forms. The music enhances direct access to the emotions (Hansen n.d.) and

simultaneously assists my mythical imagination to produce new materials, images and symbols that resolve the tensions. The tonal structure in the music assists me in making apparent the variations of emotional tensions in colour, more apparent.

Kandinsky (1977, 25) states, *“Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand which plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul.”*

Music and colour are closely woven throughout my practice, from the initial paintings and photographs to the artists books, and indeed reach that spiritual level that Kandinsky calls the soul.

### **Dialogue of the child energies: Kandinsky and colour**

Kandinsky speaks of the effect colour has on the Soul. He points out that, “It is evident therefore that colour harmony must rest only on a corresponding vibration in the human soul; and this is one of the guiding principles of the inner need.” (Kandinsky 1977, 26)

*“The phrase ‘inner need’ means primarily the impulse felt by the artist for spiritual expression. Kandinsky is apt, however to use the phrase sometimes to mean not only the hunger for spiritual expression, but also the actual expression itself.”* (Kandinsky 1977, 26)

Kandinsky further indicates the effects of different colours on individuals. He points out “that the concentration of yellow emanates from the centre, indicating the external and of a bodily nature, whilst the blue will withdraw to the centre indicating internal and that of a spiritual nature.” He also speaks of yellow as being an organic colour, “that of the earth”, and of blue “being a heavenly colour conversely when it sinks to near black, it echoes a grief that is hardly human” (Kandinsky 1977, 38).

He states: *“Shades of colour, like those of sound, are of a much finer texture and awake in the soul emotions too fine to be expressed in words...for this reason words are, and will always remain, only hints, mere suggestions of colours.”* (1977, 41).

In my practice the shadow or wounded energies as well as the magical or miraculous child energies are either ‘foregrounded’ or contrasted in colour as they are in music.

There are variations on the qualities and energies of the child archetype such as wounded, playful, confused, creative or innocent, – depending on the context – memory or idea. The interplay between the emotional energies of the wounded and magical is expressed through my emotional use of colour in the pages and spine of my artist books. For example, different papers and colour layering techniques simulate the idea of water in a number of the artworks, and reveal the different emotional energies through varying hues and tones.

The repertoire of my colour palette in my creative works is representative of the many nuances of mood and emotional expression.

## **The Shadow**

The term 'shadow' can suggest a dark negative aspect of our nature, however (Myss 2001) suggests a more suitable interpretation, that the shadow portrays that part of our 'being' that is the least familiar to our conscious mind and represents both the personal and collective, positive and negative qualities of the psyche.

Von Franz (quoted in Jung 1978) points out, "Whether the shadow becomes our friend or enemy depends largely on ourselves", intimating that the responsibility and power lies within us to negotiate this unexplored power of the shadow.

Myss (2001) indicates that the shadow is often driven by fear or desire, in its relationship to power. The dichotomy of conflicting energies manifests itself in either fear of empowerment or disempowerment or desire of empowerment or disempowerment, resulting in a push–pull effect within the internal processes of the psyche.

Bringing the shadow to the attention of the conscious mind is in effect to make one more *self* aware of our unexplored power and what qualities it contains (Pearson *et al.* 2001; Myss 2001; Brun *et al.* 1993).

The emotional pattern of the 'shadow' energy of my inner child, in this project, is identified initially at the beginning of the project through the amplification method of the fairytale *Girl with the Hair of Gold*. The fairytale fostered metaphorical thinking processes, manifesting my shadow in paintings and photographs by showing images representing the darker side of Mother Nature and my inner child (Hyde *et al.* 1992).

We draw inferences from two different domains that are transparent in meaning, in as much as our indirect understanding involves understanding one kind of entity experience in terms of another kind, via metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 178). In sand play, this type of thinking, according to Pattis Zoja (Fox 2012), is an expression of the conscious in allegorical form.

I use my creative practice to connect with archetypal energies, to find the *creative middle way* of resolving the tensions of the shadow energies by exposing them, exploring them, synthesising and finally integrating them, These are my ways of achieving the totality of *Self*.

## Alchemy

My practice-led process involves alchemy of the spirit and alchemy of the practice – such as the symbolic material and art forms that represent the spiritual.

Jung found psychological parallels in the ancient alchemists goal of not only transformation of matter, but also transformation of the spirit. Jung recognised the different states of alchemy and how it paralleled his individuation process, in the translation of the alchemists' text called *Rosarium Philosophorum* or *The Philosopher's Rose Garden*. Jung describes how the work of alchemy, such as the union of opposites, takes place in divine water, one of nature's four elements: earth, fire, air and water (1992, 137-138). For Jung, "...psychologically the task of alchemy lies in the process of confronting the dark matter of the unconscious, illuminating and liberating this matter through symbolic imagery that arises from this process". (Hyde *et al.* 1992, 129-135).

Jung developed a framework of psychological types to understand the psyche and how the individual assimilated and expressed experience, between their inner and outer worlds. Jung's aim was to balance the four functions of conscious thinking. According to Jung, the shadow aspect of the psyche could have a disruptive influence and interfere with this balance. Jung called this process of balancing the shadow with the ego a "union of opposites" (Hyde *et al.* 1992). The shape of Jung's framework manifests itself in a mandala shape. This shape is based on the centering of the inner being as expressed in the beliefs and concrete forms of Hinduism and

Buddhism. For Jung, the expression of this mandala shape is a sign of emerging wholeness (Jung 1978; Von Franz 1996).

My aim is to simultaneously balance the elements of the psyche and express this balance in an art form that denotes the spiritual element. In essence, my intention is to shift the tensions and balance between my mind, body and spirit to express this process of alchemy into a visual language that celebrates the language of the soul in physical form. I endeavor to create an art form that conveys the alchemical tensions and balance between being and notion, thus expressing the experience of wholeness or oneness, born of that metaphysical space.

The concept of alchemy also underpins the development of experimental new material in my practice. A transformative dialogue between materials and subject matter occurs as the duelling nature of the shadow and miraculous energies of the child archetype interacts with the materials chosen.

This transformative dialogue between the psyche and materials is engaged halfway through the research practice by the Jungian method of active imagination. This confrontational interaction led to the development of my three-dimensional artist book form in a mandala shape.

This symbolic expression is a Pre-Symbolic Level of expression of the deeper nature of my being, where the image making unconscious forges a non-representational image during the process of alchemy (Fox 2012).

The four elements of nature have appeared in varying degrees within different symbolic art forms and images throughout the various autobiographical stages of my creative journey.

The significance of water is extremely important for my practice psychologically and creatively as, according to Anderson (2014), during the process of alchemy, the dissolution of the chaotic matter (material prima) that has the potential for form is promoted through the use of water. In sand play, when water is often added, it is an indication of psychic change where the negative energies can be dissolved.

The tensions of struggle and integration of the opposite energies is revealed in the artist books, whilst the spiritual resurrection of the union of opposites is realised in the wedding dress installation revealing the spiritual dimension.

## **Mythology, Imagination and Phases of the Journey**

Joseph Campbell (1991) and Carl Jung (1978) both suggest that the power of the myth is both personal and collective and contains metaphysical and spiritual themes that question and challenge beliefs around identity, sacred, the cosmos, and values of the human spirit. Campbell identified four different functions of the myth as: (a) searching the mystery of oneself, one's purpose; (b) discovery of the mystery of the world, nature, the human experience within that and one's individual positioning within that experience; (c) the connection to the culture and its ideologies; and (d) the instructive nature of the myth, how to live an authentic well rounded life – a process of maturation (Campbell 1991).

## **The Hero's Quest**

Campbell's illustrates this notion in his insightful interpretation of Friedrich Nietzsche's parable about the camel, the lion and the dragon in which Nietzsche illustrates three transformations of the spirit (Campbell 1991) see Appendix B. This mythical story is about a journey or 'hero's quest', where the protagonist passes through three challenging transformations. Watson & Krebbs describe the journey in this way:

*"...the camel signifies the final result of the subtle, yet persistent, transforming of innocence and wonder of a child into the certain and dutiful beast of burden who mindlessly carries out and perpetuates the long-standing ideals of culture. But, as Nietzsche says, sometimes on the camel's journey into the loneliest desert, he finds himself transformed into the lion. No longer willing to bear his culture's burdens, the lion seeks to slay his masters so as to make the desert his own. Totally mastering his own desert, the lion then transforms into the child whose serious playfulness gives birth to new values" (Watson and Krebbs 1997, 682).*

Victor Turner highlights this notion of the three challenging transformations, in his theory of liminality in his examination of indigenous 'rites of passage' and its rituals in the period of child to adult transition. These rituals and 'rites of passage' connects the inner world to the outer world (Turner 1974).

In Jungian practice of self-exploration, the pursuit for wholeness and metaphysical understanding draws on a culture's myths (Pearson *et al.* 2001). P.W. Martin (1955) uses the term the 'living myth' that resides in the present day individual. Western culture however, has removed this notion from everyday experience, relegating the myth to forms of entertainment such as movies, instead of recognising that the mythical energy and language is within oneself.

Martin's interpretation of the myth as 'living' revealed to me my own 'living myth' as a connecting link between the patterns of memories, emotions and perceptions of my psyche, the archetypes, and the collective unconscious.

## **The Creative Middle Way**

P.W. Martin's interpretation of the *creative middle way* is the 'mythical method', a transformative approach used by Jung and T.S. Eliot. This interpretation reveals for me parallels of my own experience.

Martin suggests that Jung and Eliot's approaches speak respectively of the constructive symbolic nature of the unconscious, the patterns of timelessness of experience, and the death and rebirth of ideas and forms. These approaches were simultaneously identified as a withdrawal and return or challenge and response. The dualities in the approaches spoke of the unknown world of the 'other side of consciousness' (Martin 1955, 14) and its ability to enable the channeling of energies into new birthing creative possibilities.

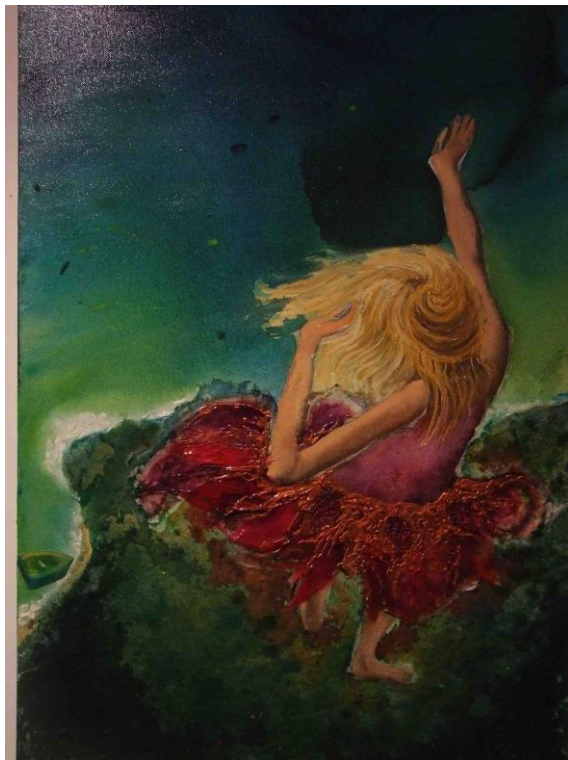
I have correlated these interpretations, realisations and events in my practice as 'Separation'; 'Struggle and Return' and 'Re-integration'.



## T.S. Eliot: The mythical method and phases of the practice

Martin describes Eliot's initial perception, constructed from his Christian faith, in the beginning of his Journey, in *The Waste Land*, where Eliot, realises through his experiences of desolation and hopelessness, he meets his shadow archetype, the negative side of himself (Martin 1955, 10).

I correlated this to the Separation phase of my practice, where I confront my negative (wounded) shadow energy, this energy is expressed in the painted images of the storms, the drowning girl and the young girl twirling and whirling directionless, along the cliff edge (Figure 4). These works served to suggest the exposure and eventual expiry of the shadow energies that feed the psychological state of abandonment, alienation and disempowerment. Expressed in concrete form, the artworks initiate the "progress of the soul" (Frampton 1996b, 176).



**Figure 4:** Susan Christie, *Should I, Shouldn't I?* (2011), paint, inks, mixed media, 55 x 84cm

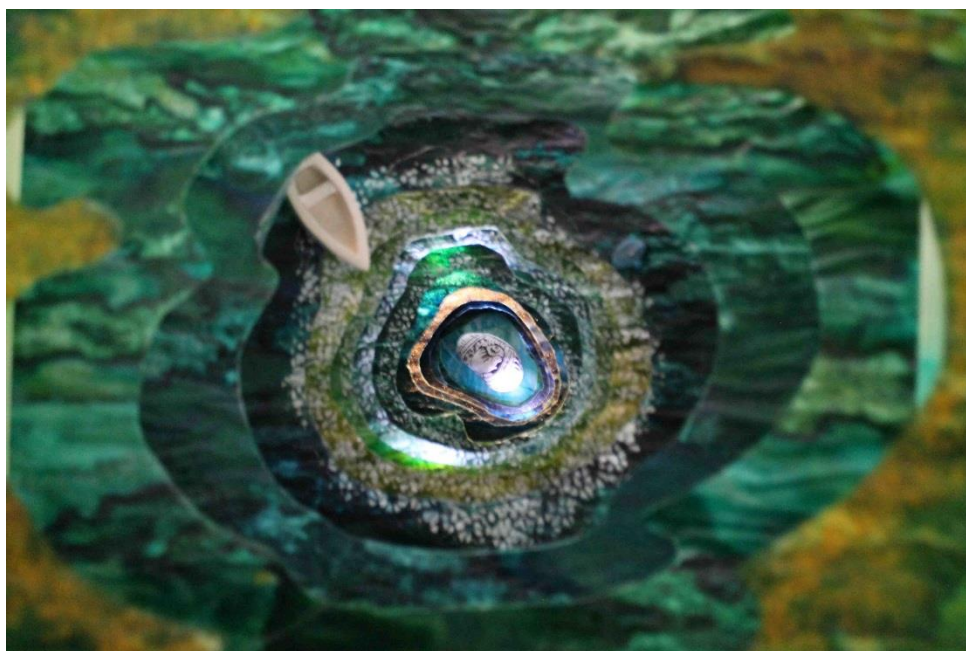
During the middle of Eliot's journey, he uses the notion of the myth to express creatively through his poetry, his experience of the struggle, which he describes as "the intolerable wrestle with words and meanings" (Martin 1955). This struggle,

Martin suggests, lies in the conscious language, which is supposed to give evidence of expression of our senses.

This notion correlates to the 'Struggle and Return' phase, where my shadow is confronted with my miraculous child and I try to make explicit that which is unspoken and make the unknown, knowable through symbolic form of the artist book.

Towards the end of Eliot's journey in his poem the *Four Quartets*, he reveals his reflections and brings his reflections to the collective of humanity. It is these reflections that parallel the 'Re-Integration' phase of my practice represented by the interactive installation of sand play. This installation provides a space where there is a shared connection between the viewer and my inner and outer world of symbolic allusions through the interactive offering of the transformative experience of the sand play. The audience may thereby find, share and connect the spiritual of their inner world with the outward concrete notion of my spiritual world.

The artists' books, (Figure 5) represent the struggle and return phase of my practice and contain all the symbols of the elements of alchemy, for example, the boat (earth); the texture and coloured pages of the book (water); the bloodied lace (fire); and the bubbles (air). The physical process of manifesting the books indicated to me a process of synthesis. The mythical imagination afforded this synthesis.



**Figure 5:** Susan Christie, *Bewilderment* (2013), inks, watercolour, clay 34 x 36 x 56cm

## Mythical Imagination

The Mythical Imagination indicates for my practice a way of finding a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious as a form of living integration (Martin 1955, 164). The establishment of a symbolic dialogue for my practice as a way of bridging the gap between the conscious and unconscious, is through the imagination.

Michael Vannoy Adams describes Jungian analysis as employing an “essentialist” method, “which is an inquiry into the underlying phenomena of psychic reality and investigates the essential being or the meaning of “images”. Adams reveals that it’s not a case that the image is hidden from us, it is just unknown, because we haven’t yet grasped the language that the unconscious employs (2013).

Polanyi, (Adams 2013) describes the imagination as the tacit dimension, as “we know more than we can tell,” that is, images are a form of inner knowledge that can’t be articulated in spoken and written word. Adams describes imagination as the study of images, or one who “images” and that the “function of the non-ego images is transformation, as they represent alternative perspective to the perspective of the conscious images” (2013). The struggle ensues between both, when the

representational conscious image is confronted with the non-ego images of the unconscious.

In this study, when the conscious is presented with these 'non-directive' images, there is this push-pull process that ensues, as the conscious dialogues with the unconscious, trying to establish trust. The tensions are resolved through the mythical imagination.

My mythical imagination process took the form of active imagination, a sand play process of dialogue, which is discussed in more detail in my Methodology (Chapter 2).

The intuitive active imagination process grounds and synthesises my experience within artist books and then through the reflexive process of the practice I experience the numinous experience of circumambulating my book form. This in turn validates for me, that my mandala-shaped form is indeed the symbol for my psyche. As a result of the synthesising and integration process a connection is made to my spiritual dimension as an experience of going beyond the *Self*, to transcend worldly boundaries. This is expressed in the wedding dress installation (Figure 6). The dress symbolises the body and soul uniting in equal balance. The spiritual or divine is yearning for freedom whilst the body is anchored to earthly existence. The death of the past being raises hope and possibilities for the future being.



**Figure 6:** Susan Christie, *The Pivot* (2013), lace wedding dress

In essence imagination is the enabler to bring to consciousness the transforming symbols of knowledge from the unconscious.

Campbell and Jung's notion of the myth and Jung's correlation of the psyche's myth making imagination to indigenous tribal rituals is significant for my practice as I identify with the Hero's Quest, as my journey of physical and spiritual self-discovery. I identify with the myth making, image-forming processes of the psyche in the method of active imagination, which activates images of the psyche in a non-directed way.

These notions were used to correlate the obstacles found on my journey as I reclaim the spirit of the miraculous child, such as the confrontation of the negative beliefs of the shadow child. I correlated P.W Martin's *creative middle way* as a way of identifying the different transformations through the journey ultimately discovering of my creative gifts, rebirth of the practice and the strengthening of my inner guide.

Vygotsky's notion of aesthetic catharsis and Jung's notion of the spiritual *Self* are evidenced in my installations and by installation artists whose concepts and materiality of practice have influenced my work in this project.

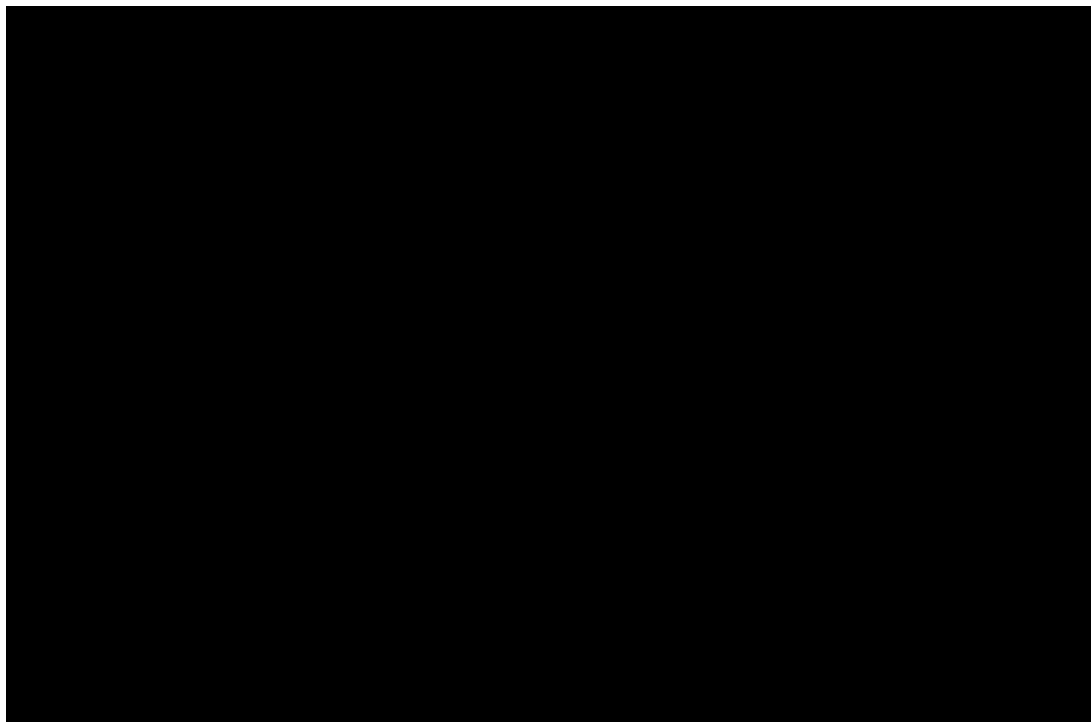
The potential of these theories will be grounded in Chapter 3 where I discuss the impact of these and artists that have influenced the practice.

## Part 2: Artists and Art Forms

### Paintings and Contemporary Artists

The significance of my practice-led research is that it not only allows the flexibility of intuitive interpretation, but it has nurtured the birth of my multi-modal forms of expression. The forms such as paintings and photographs, artists' books, and installations, show the transformative changes through the investigative journey, spawning new possibilities as artworks emerge from existing materials.

The way in which I transcribed my experiences on these different materials and art forms make changes in the way in which my symbolic language speaks. I consider the notions, forms and materials of each artist at each investigative phase and how they have portrayed spiritual, transformation and psychological states thus contributing to my choices and decisions informing my artwork.



**Figure 7:** John Martin, *The Great Day of His Wrath* (1927-1928), oil 1965 x 3032cm (Tate Gallery)

I viewed, John Martin's painting *The Great Day of His Wrath* (1927) in 2010 (Figure 7). It evoked powerful feelings of awe and beauty, as I recognised the tensions between the apocalyptic forces of nature and in the foreground the diminutive figure

of man powerless in the face of nature. This painting like many of Martin's works is religious and based on biblical themes and 'sensational effects'. Like many of the romantics, symbolists and Pre-Raphaelites, his concepts, ideals and philosophies in reaction to Classicism were steeped in the emotional, mythical and sublime (Tate Gallery). The symbolism in his work such as the eruption of the abyss, the lightning and glow of fires in the distance, correlates to Jung's notion of alchemist symbols of earth and fire thus expressing man's insignificance in the destructive alchemy of nature.



**Figure 8:** Susan Christie, *Estrangement I*





**Figure 9:** Susan Christie, *Estrangement II* (2011),  
paint acrylic mixed media, 152 x 101cm

The feeling of awe, but also insignificance, in Martin's symbolic forms, evoked in me the emotional sense of awe – yet also insignificance and alienation, I felt in the face of nature and in the experiences of my childhood transitional years. These tensions were expressed in my two paintings *Estrangement I* and *Estrangement II* (Figures 8 and 9).

Simultaneously, as I was revisiting my childhood experiences through sensory, empathetic and wounded intuitive lenses, a similar image that came to my mind was *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais, based on Shakespeare's Ophelia in *Hamlet*.

In his painting Millais uses water and flowers which symbolises the dialogue from this Shakespearian play (Treuerherz 2012). There is a suggestion of correlation between my photographic work *Reprieve* and with Millais *Ophelia* (Figure 10) insomuch that both are images of young girls, at their 'coming of age' stage. The exception in Millais work *Ophelia*, is that she presents as symbolically dying, thus validating Tacey's proposal that the symbolism of the child archetype holds the potential for rebirth – but also abandonment and death.



**Figure 10:** John Everett Millais, *Ophelia* (1851-1852), oil, 762 x 1118 cm, Tate Gallery

Martin and Millais's symbolic layering of paint and forms of nature validated and illuminated my previous techniques and use of nature in my paintings to reveal emotional and symbolic content. Their works spoke to me of the themes of alchemy, death, resurrection, beauty and mysticism.

Whilst Martin and Millais scratched at the surface of my psyche and validated the symbolic and sensory in nature in my painting techniques, contemporary artists, Kennedy and Derges threw a deeper, personal-yet-collective light on the possibilities of the aesthetic catharsis and the expression of spiritual transformation within my creative practice.

## **Contemporary Artists: Theme of water as process of Spiritual Alchemy**

*The Taste of River Water* is a collection of poetry, which is a series of narrative meditations on life and death by Cate Kennedy.

Kennedy, in her poem *The Taste of River Water*, describes the death of her unborn child and the child's inability to breathe, and how it is born drowned, and the meditative, ritualistic processes associated with grieving and loss. Kennedy then

juxtaposes life in the next poem related to her present daughter as if she is being reborn (Koval 2011):

*Our children's hands reach for us*

*Like a benediction,*

*Showing us the way*

*Into the deep water*

(Alcock 2011)

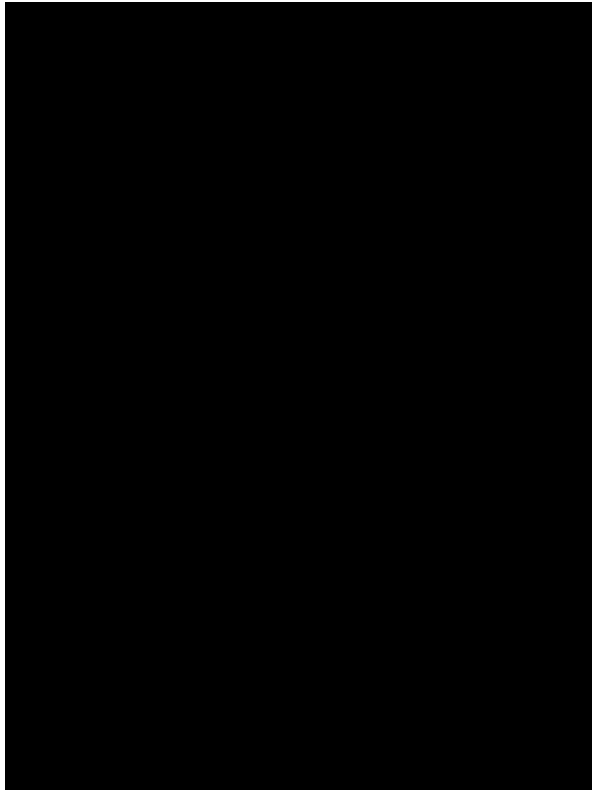
In her poetry, Kennedy makes the effort to displace the reader's perception through her visionary metaphorical prose, which opens up meaning and connects the reader to the mysteries of life and death.

Kennedy focuses on the spiritual and her living child in her poetry, such as, the comparisons between the action of the child and the spiritual meaning of 'benediction' and 'into deep water', connecting one with the ocean of the unconscious. Synchronously, I paralleled these visionary metaphors to the rebirth of my inner child, the mystery of the symbolic and metaphorical language of my practice and how it mirrors the baptismal process found in many religions.

Kennedy comments how she finds it cathartic, expressing those far-reaching emotional experiences in her poetry. As previously mentioned, Vygotsky speaks of the emotional and imaginative processes as a catalyst for the transformative effect of the artistic and aesthetic response. I correlate in an empathetic sense with Kennedy's poetry as she shares with us the viewer, the process of the lived experience, the loss, grieving and the aftermath of acceptance and finding joy in the birth and life of her living daughter she expresses through the creative act of poetry.

Kennedy relates to the alchemical and cyclic elements of nature, earth, fire, water and air, in an overall reminder of human powerlessness in the face of these significant life events.

Whilst Kennedy dwells, in words, on the notions of powerlessness, the cyclic nature of alchemy and the cathartic affects of the creative process, Susan Derges expresses metaphorically the process of alchemy in her photographic images distorted and processed by the element of water.



**Figure 11:** Susan Derges, *Full Circle 2* (1992) 16 x12 inches  
Cibachrome photogram, 1 of 30 prints, (Derges 1992)

Derges reveals the themes of birth and death in the images of her work and describes them as a “coming into being, things developing and forming and dissolving out of form” (V&A Channel 2010 - 2011). Jung described the transformational process of alchemy as being initiated by fire and then cleansed and purified by water (Hyde *et al.* 1992).

Derges currently works with and from nature. Her creative works, content, form, material and technique are fed by nature, such as *Full Circle 2* (Derges 1992) (Figure 11), a series of photograms from different perspectives which aesthetically shows the significant metamorphosis of the frog’s life cycle (Gribben-Abbott 2011). She uses the distortion of water to blur her images to suggest the state of becoming. She comments on how she uses water and natural light as a tool to express the essence of her work.

Derges sees water metaphorically as the clue to how the function of the inner and outer processes of our minds and bodies operate. She likens water to being

interchangeable such as “the idea of circulatory system in the landscape or in the body”, and that it is a connection to everything else.

The symbol of water fluidly changes in nearly every autobiographical phase of transformation in my artwork; its colour, shape and image, mirroring the internal desires and revelations that simultaneously change.



**Figure 12:** Susan Christie, *Reprieve* (2013),  
inkjet photograph 115 x 90cm

Creating altered photographic images is a new medium for my creative practice (Figure 12). It suggests to me, in conjunction with Derges’s work, the possibilities of water and metamorphosis as important elements in my practice.

In context of the practice, these artist and aesthetic references spoke to me about the shadow or wounded energies of my child archetype and mythical dimensions of the Psyche. These references confirmed for me that the surface and the deeper levels of the ocean representing the abyss of the psyche was a perfect metaphor to explore the process of alchemy and the opposing archetypal energies I experienced in this research project (The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism 2010).

These artists and their art forms stimulated and contributed the creation of new materials in my practice that simulated the various surface textures and underwater hues of water.

## Artists' Books and Book Artists

Kennedy and Derges's creative works indicated wider unconscious aspects of my mythical themes.

Campbell's notion that the spiritual function of the myth is what gives life point and purpose evoked questions such as: How can the mythical method creatively resolve the oppositional energies? (Martin 1955, 165) How does the miraculous child archetype reveal itself and what art form could possibly engender the process of "totality of Self"?

Campbell's notion of the myth and these questions created a shift in my thinking and posed new directions both conceptually and in the exploration of new media and methods.



**Figure 13:** Susan Christie, *Will I? Won't I?* (2011), 76 x 102cm; and *Can I Can't I?* (2011) paint, ink, collage, flocking, 152 x 101cm

The notion of the shoreline as a liminal zone representing decision-making as outlined by Marguerite Johnson on *The Adriane Project* (2012) illuminated the underlying meaning of my images of the girl along the edge of the shoreline from my

preliminary exhibition (Figure 13) creating a shift in my thinking in relation to a new art form.

In an effort to discover my miraculous inner child, creation of new materials ensued, such as simulating the various surface water textures and underwater hues and new images inspired by artists' book images and structures. The artist book form is a new medium for my practice. My intrigue of the artist book was in part inspired by "Preface to an Artist Book".

*With these lips do I to thee speak  
With these eyes do I to thee see  
With these ears do I to thee hear  
With these hands do I to thee give  
Thine own lips  
Thine own eyes  
Thine own ears  
Thine own experience for thee to own*

Author unknown (Preface to an Artist Book 2011)

This quote highlighted for me the notion of giving birth to an art form, giving the form part of my soul through senses and experience, thus giving this art form its own life and voice.

In exploring the notions behind the development of the artist book, I discovered the Avant Garde '60s artists focused on the book as a medium for the exploration of ideas, in their reaction to traditional art forms. They were more concerned about the idea itself and its documentation, and that everyone can draw their own meaning from the artist book no matter what form or content (Black and Kearns 2011). Heidegger pointed out the idea itself and its documentation as an art form, is that every one can draw their own meaning from the art form yet both the art form and idea expressed can simultaneously produce a shared understanding of that idea or truth (Heidegger 2007).

Art critic and theorist Lucy Lippard defines their form and suggests that "Artists' books are best defined as whatever isn't anything else" (Lippard quoted in Lyons

1985), implying that they can come in representational or non-representational forms.

Artist books come in many forms, shapes and media. There are artists' books that are unique; digitised; and printed in multiple editions. In essence, it's not just the format features of the book, but the structuring devices that have this tactile interactive aspect that artists' books exploit.

It is interesting to note that I have chosen a unique form, which is a one-off, not digitised or multiple edition. Jung also suggested that the *creative middle way* is also a unique journey, as it is not prescriptive, it must be made as an independent discovery, demonstrating that there is no one right way. While each art work, artist book or journey is personal, they all share common characteristics (Martin 1955, 164).

Two definitions that reveal the purpose behind the notion of my book form and that indicate the collective and personal uses of this form in relation to my project are:

*"Artists recognise the long history of the book as a vessel for the conveyance of information and ideas. There is a reverence for the book as an artefact and a notion of the authority bestowed on an idea by its encapsulation in book form."*  
(Cole 2008, 2).

*"Ordinary books are made from the outside in, artist's books are made from the inside out."* (Cole 2008)

The initial quote conveyed that possibilities engendered by the diverse notion of the book form could represent in a broader sense a physical symbolic form of shared understanding of the spiritual knowledge of the *Quest*.

The second quote indicates that the "made from the inside out", is the possibility that the physical form could reveal the psychological terrain of my inner world.

My intention for choosing the artist book form is not only the intimacy of the book form, but its diversity of materials and concepts, its multidimensionality, its indefinability and flexibility in content and format. The significance of these features



is that they mirror the multidimensional nature of the psyche and I had an intuitive notion that it would enable me to resolve the enigma of the *Self*, in this study.

The significance of Jung's research of indigenous knowledge and notions of the symbolic content of the mandala and the stone as a symbol of inner *Self* furthered these intentions and choice of the book form as a way of representing the spiritual aspect of the psyche.

## **Properties of artists' books and aesthetic thinking**

"The challenge of the work, the material it employs, the nuances of the forms expressed, embodies the idea it expresses" (Eisner 2002).

The significance of Eisner's statement highlighted the aesthetic challenges I was facing. These challenges were the choice and decision-making processes employed to balance the tensions evoked between my inner world and cognitive processes and the artist book form and materials in the process of making.

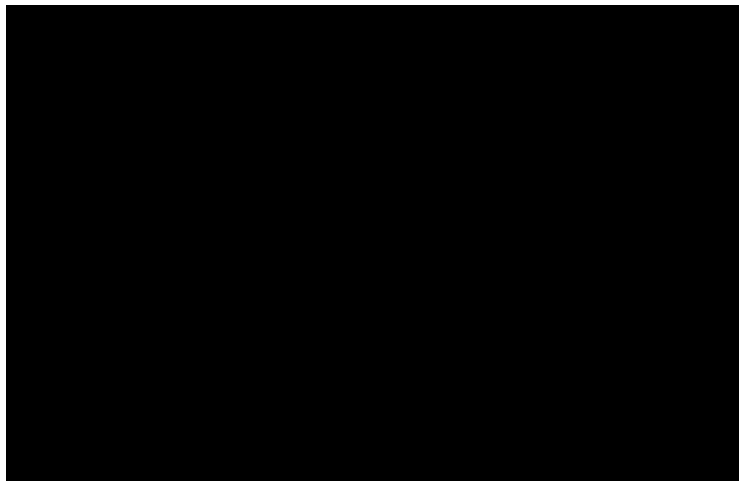
Eisner indicates that "The importance of the relationship between thinking, material, form and content are for the artist to learn how to think within the material and form about the constraints and affordances of the medium so that the artist can realise the possibilities of the medium and form and exploit these in order to realise the aim he or she values in the work" (Eisner 2002, 5).

*The structure determines how the "artist book is read and influences how the "reader" interacts with it* (Verheyen 1998). The significance of this statement is that Vygotsky emphasises not only those internal emotional and aesthetic responses to the art form by the artist, but that the tensions portrayed by the artist within the form, are in turn reflected back between viewer and art form, as a social, interactive process, thus continuing a generative cycle, between artist, art form and viewer.

The properties and commonalities that are found in all artist book forms include structure, page turnings, layout and space sequencing as well as whether it is in non-linear (from) or linear (about) structural form, or whether it is a 'from' or 'about' approach. The 'from' and 'about' approaches impact on self-expression and readability. A 'from' approach, as in *Aunt Sallie's Lament* (Kaufman 1993) (Figure

14) is more direct and subjective and non-linear in narrative and juxtaposed in a direct manner. An 'about' approach, as in *Dolls of the Spirit* (Drucker 1980) (Figure 15), is conceptual, linear format, intellectual and objective with stark contrast between image and text (Lyons 1985, 64).

**'From' approach:**



**Figure 14:** Margaret Kaufman, *Aunt Sallie's Lament* (1992), limited edition (150 copies)  
Non-linear format, polygon-shaped book in 2 boxes Pub: Chronicle books, San Francisco, SLQ artists book collection

**'About' approach:**



**Figure 15:** J. Drucker, *Production Narrative*, (1980) Linoleum cut, gold gothic text, linear format. One edition. Self-published US. Artist's books online.

The significance of this relational process and approach and how it creates a shift in thinking, is illustrated by Juli Haas's artist statement regarding her artist book *The Stage* in the State Library of Queensland artist book collection,

"I make books because the format allows me to have a different creative direction. I can think sculpturally and 2D whilst embracing a narrative, whether visual or aided by text" (Haas 1992 - 1993).

Brun, in her book, *Symbols of the Soul*, describes how the nebulous archetypal energies become apparent in art forms and cites Van Eenwyk's notion "that archetypes break up the linear flow of consciousness infusing it with a chaotic/nonlinear flow" (Brun *et al.* 1993, 121).

These statements validated my process of book making and suggested psychologically how shifts in perception occurred in my thinking.

Simultaneously in my conversation with artist bookmaker, Susan Bowden, at West End Studios on November 24, 2013, further validated these statements, as she described her process and experience regarding her book *Moeraki Boulders*. Her book was informed by paintings previously completed of boulders found at Moeraki in New Zealand South Island, which she had transformed into her three-dimensional artist book. She commented that there definitely was a change in her thinking, such as when she returns to her previous artwork, her thinking is consolidated and, in turn, informs a new artwork.

The significance of Haas, Bowden and Brun's statements for my work, is that by using the *creative middle way* as suggested by P.W. Martin's 'mythical method', I evoke and harness the chaotic energies through the symbolic non-linear structure of my book form. This in turn reveals aesthetically the dichotomy of energies in the pages, the structure, textures and colours of the book form and simultaneously informs and changes my thinking and informs future artworks.

Juli Haas and Julie Chen, well established book artists, influenced aspects of my artist-book-making practice in significant ways such as concepts, form and materials.

## Juli Haas

In her artist profile, Haas observes “...that most people are absorbed and consumed with themselves and do not see themselves as connected to each other or other areas in their lives” (Greenhill Galleries 2006).

Conceptually all Haas’s books use psychological symbolism in the form of narrative. Haas delves into the complexities of human experiences through the characters that occupy her imagination and her artworks on a personal and collective level.



**Figure 16:** Juli Haas, *Stage*, artist book (1992-1993), (Haas2007) (SLQ artist book collection)

Haas’s intention, I believe, in *Stage* (Figure 16), is to portray the human persona, suggesting what we are seeing is just an illusion. *Stage* is a unique, linear-format artist book, utilising the ‘from’ approach. I was drawn to the intensity of colour and layering of light and dark and the character-like poses of the different personalities occupying the space.

Juli Haas observes in her own work the cross-feed of watercolor and printmaking techniques and how they supplement each other (Haas 1992-1993). I correlated this to my own method of layering, similar to Haas’s method, as it reveals the intensity of shadow and light in both her work and in mine. The layering indicates to me the psychological and emotional nuances of light and dark in the human psyche within my practice.

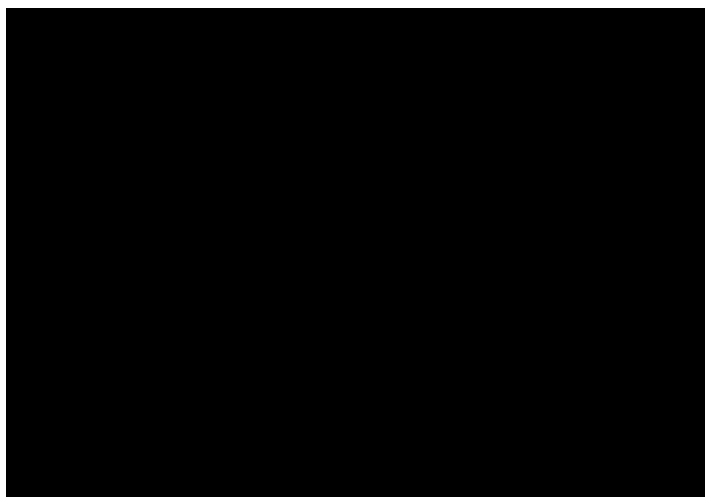
In an interview by email November 13, 2013 regarding *The Oyster Book of Lessons from the Memory Room*, (Figure 17), Haas pointed out that “the words and sayings are excerpts from poetry, film, music lyrics, nursery rhymes and proverbs, that complete the fabric of our daily lives” (Haas 2007).

I correlated *The Oyster Book of Lessons from the Memory Room* to my childhood memories, full of instructive rhymes and adages, that defined my childhood as I constantly heard or sang ritualistically with other children.

These rhymes and adages were another way of learning through metaphorical thinking representing the rules of childhood (Lakoff *et al.* 2003, 178).

Haas’s visionary metaphors both text and image, highlight the metaphorical nature and multidimensional aspects of her concepts which then opens the space for the viewer in both the personal and collective sense.

Similarly her images suggested to me the chaotic thinking of a child as described by Freud (as quoted in Zoja 2011): “A child does not think linearly as the adult is capable of doing: thought, feeling, sensations, concept and memory are all inextricably interwoven. A child’s thought is fluid and movement can take place on several planes at once.”



**Figure 17:** Juli Haas, *The Oyster Book of Lessons from the Memory Room* (2007), artist book 325 x 210mm codex, stab binding (Haas2007)

Materially, Haas’s girl images were rendered in black and white reflecting a nostalgic ‘olde worlde’ feel of the past and the images spiraled at different angles on the

pages, reminding me of the twirling whirling girl images in my own paintings (Figure 18).



**Figure 18:** Susan Christie, *Would I? Wouldn't I?* (2011), mixed-media paint, ink, lace, flocking, 76 x 102cm

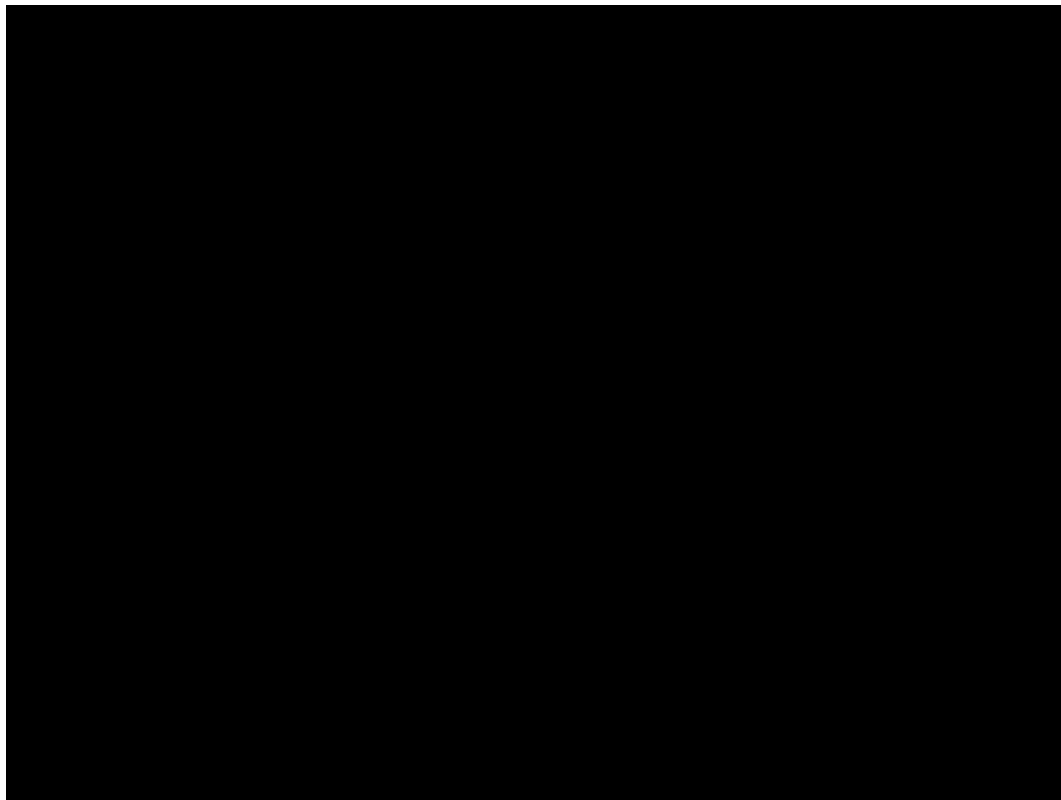
I recognised in Haas's work the repetitive circular shapes, the seemingly random juxtaposition of text next to parts of anatomy such as "Achilles heel, land on your feet" are placed around the curve of the leg, foot and heel. The way in which the images and sayings are juxtaposed, is a paradoxical contradiction, implying that nothing seems to be as it really is and there is an undercurrent of diverse interpretations. I correlated these images and notions to my own childhood senses and memories and sensations of spiraling as a reaction to conform to a linear way of learning.

In a material sense, her use of lace resonates strongly and influenced my work. According to Haas, in reference to this work, lace means to bind but also is also a reference to the feminine.

Haas in her more recent work *The Amazing Box o' Ballots* (Haas 2012) (Figure 19) depicts a sardonic psychological profile of human nature and again nonlinear format 'from' approach, in a sculptural ballot box format, with the illuminating metaphorical cover title: "A real crowd pleaser...you won't believe your eyes."

Haas commented in an email interview on November 13, 2013, that one of the things that appeals to her is “the idea of a lid or door opening to reveal whatever is within” and that many of the images come from the prints done for *The Oyster Book of Lessons from the Memory Room*.

I correlated this notion of opening up the box, to Pandora’s Box and the mystery of the psyche. It highlighted the notion that I had creative choices on what I used and how and why I foregrounded specific aspects of my psyche.



**Figure 19:** Juli Haas, *The Amazing Box o’ Ballots* (2012), artist book, box format 24 x 21 x 10cm, proscenium stage multilayered prints (image courtesy of the artist) (2013)

The National Library of Australia edition describes how the book “opens up to reveal a miniature stage with multilayers of black, red and white prints that show voters behind a proscenium arch of red and gold cord tassels” (Haas 2012). The main features of this book for my creative practice are the notion of the box form and the concept of layering and the stage presentation, which alludes to psychological layering and that everything on the surface, is not what it seems.

## Julie Chen

In 2010, I viewed in the Victoria & Albert Museum, Julie Chen's artist book *Octopus* (Chen and McDevitt 1992) (Figure 20), which illustrates a poem by Elizabeth McDevitt. I was struck by the way in which it was presented in a box format and how it opened in a concertina type fashion. I was fascinated by how even though I observed the book from every angle, I could not fathom the complete shape of the Octopus at the bottom. I intuitively knew I had found my symbolic form.

Jung deducted from his collective research that a symbolic image or word has a wider "unconscious" aspect that can't be denied or explained. In effect, symbolic images contain implicit knowledge that can only be articulated through symbols (Jung 1978). I observed this indeterminate element in the form of the octopus partially hidden in the base of the book.

*Octopus* informed my work conceptually, structurally and organically.

Conceptually Chen uses the spiritual symbolism of nature. Her intention is to challenge the viewers' concept of a book, yet, through the structure and readability of this book, "provide a deeply meaningful experience through the intimacy of the book" ("*Octopus*" 2012).

Her book is a tunnel format enclosed in a dark green silk covered clamshell box, providing anticipation and suggesting mystery. The pages of the book are shades of green and blue, suggesting the depths of the ocean. According to the Victoria and Albert Museum of Art and Design, Artist Book Collection "*The lines of the poem run along the wave shaped edges of each page descending into a nebulous shaped octopus like form at the bottom. When the book is fully extended, one can see the evocation of the depths, as it reveals the deep-sea diorama*" ("*Octopus*" 2012). The octopus lurks in the depths of the book, indicating its presence with its eye and formless body on the last page at the bottom of the book.





**Figure 20:** Julie Chen, *Octopus* (1992), artist's book, tunnel format, edition 150 x 27 x 35cm; 77cm extended ("Octopus" 2012)

The layers of depth in this book simulate fluid and calm moments in the ocean. The octopus form in her book is reminiscent in its formless shape of an embryo or an idea, waiting to be born, visible only as a bump or indication on the surface.

Symbols that are manifested and expressed in my practice, are a direct response from the unconscious via the symbolic intuition and are a result of a visionary image that seemingly comes from nowhere. Whereas metaphorical images and thinking, also connected to the unconscious via a variety of sensory modes of intuition, is a transparent process as previously outlined by Lakoff and Johnson.

It wasn't until 2013 that I became consciously aware of the meaning of the words in the poem in Julie Chen's *Octopus* as they came as an illumination to me, metaphorically suggesting the conflict between the conscious and unconscious.

*"Who are you to talk of  
rigorous intellectual honesty  
You who use ink as an octopus does also tentacle and beaked  
You for whom words are a decoy and a disguise  
A blue cloud in which I flounder, not finding you".  
(Chen et al. 1992)*

I correlated the metaphorical meaning of the words to my deep inner needs to birth my creative *Self*, and the realisations that words were not enough. This realisation is revealed in my reflective diary as follows:

*‘The realisation that this is what I have been doing – weaving back & forth through time and space my memories, the left over bits and fragments that needed to be sutured together to makes those parts of me whole, to recognise and honor those sacred parts of myself and the wider world in general.’*

Reflective diary (2013)

I realised that I had surpassed the conventional notion of the book form by using the artists’ books as a method of working with psychological states such as mythological imagination and the child archetypal energies to reveal the book form, as a symbol for the depths of my psyche.

The significance of the diversity, flexibility and multidimensional nature of the artist book, its richness of unique materials, concepts and forms helped me to manifest shifts in my perceptions and the enrichment of my practice.

## **Installation Artists and Art Forms**

*“Most museums and galleries are designed to show masterpieces; objects made and planned elsewhere for exhibition in relatively neutral spaces. But many artists today do not make self-contained masterpieces; they do not want to and do not try to. Nor are they for the most part interested in neutral spaces. Rather, their work includes the space it’s in; embraces it, uses it. Viewing space becomes not frame but material. And that makes it hard to exhibit.”*

– Alanna Heiss on the exhibition *Rooms* at PS1  
in 1976 (McTighe 2012)

The potential significance of constructing the inner space and outer form of my artist’s books to represent my psychological inner space, is that I consciously realised the potential of the surrounding space of my art forms, as a conduit for the living experience. In essence, I realised the possibilities of creating different immersive experiences for both myself and my audience.

The process could be achieved by the juxtaposition of personal objects, light and sound, thus engendering the spiritual and transformational experience. Installation art, like artists' books is a new art form for my creative practice. Similarly as with development of artists' books, the Avant Garde of the 1960s focused on the space, immersive experience, objects and use of digital technology in reaction to traditional art forms. In essence, liberating the traditional 2D forms to 3D experiences.

The ephemeral nature of installation art mirrors the transitory and transformative nature of life experiences and reflects Vygotsky's notion of the emotional and imaginative potential of the primary 'lived' experience and the reflexive aesthetic nature of the arts practice to be used for cathartic transformative purposes.

Installation artists that have influenced my work, exploit the installation art form, by way of juxtaposition and placement of materials, sound, lighting and objects, as a way of fostering an emotional contradiction between the viewer and art form or space, creating an experience of aesthetic catharsis or process of alchemy for both artist and viewer.

In my practice, the installation art form and space is used as a bridge or neutral space acting as a potential catalyst for emotional contradiction and transformations of perception. Installation artists, Unsworth, Beuys and Forouhar, articulate this form of "social emotional contradiction" or process of alchemy, through emotion, the senses, memory, lived experience and the notion of the psychological and spiritual symbolism in their work.

Joseph Beuys, Ken Unsworth and Parastou Forouhar use materials symbolically, focusing on the material nature of objects and their relationship to the emotive nature and human senses, specifically their ability to evoke memories and human experience.

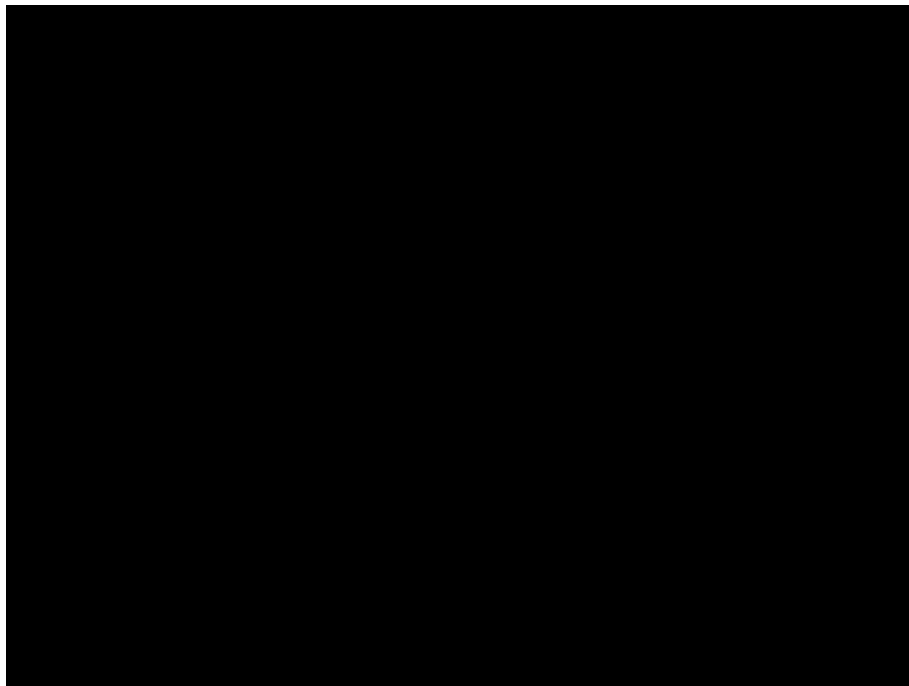
### **Joseph Beuys: Spiritual shaman and symbolism**

Beuys's notion of the spiritual is primarily what influences and resonates in my work, reflecting what he suggests to be his choice to live his life and present his art forms in a ritualistic, shamanic way.

Beuys, who I would term a 'social conscience artist', is a World War II survivor, influenced by the surrealists and their exploration of the psyche. Beuys uses his art as a kind of spiritual means to heal himself and society.

His beliefs and perceptions of humanity were that society would place more value on economic rationalism and this would counteract and minimise the use of 'emotions' therefore minimising a major source of energy and creativity in individuals (Ulmer 1985).

I also hold the belief and perception of humanity, that our society currently still faces these challenges today of placing more value on economic rationalism especially in such areas as creativity, minimising the use of non-rational methods of intuition, the potential of metaphysical experience and spiritual dimensions of *self* knowledge to empower, innovate and universally connect.



**Figure 21:** Joseph Beuys, *The Pack (Das Rudel)* (1969), Volkswagen, felt, flashlights, animal fat. Image from Art Observed (2011)

Beuys work, *The Pack (Das Rudel)* (Figure 21), from his exhibition *Stripes from the House of Shaman 1964 –1972*, is an “installation comprised of a re-purposed Volkswagen van which has given birth to and is towing wooden sleds carrying bundles of felt, animal fat and flashlights” Art Observed (2011). Art Observed (2011) points out that the materials used by Beuys such as “felt, wood, coat, animal skin,

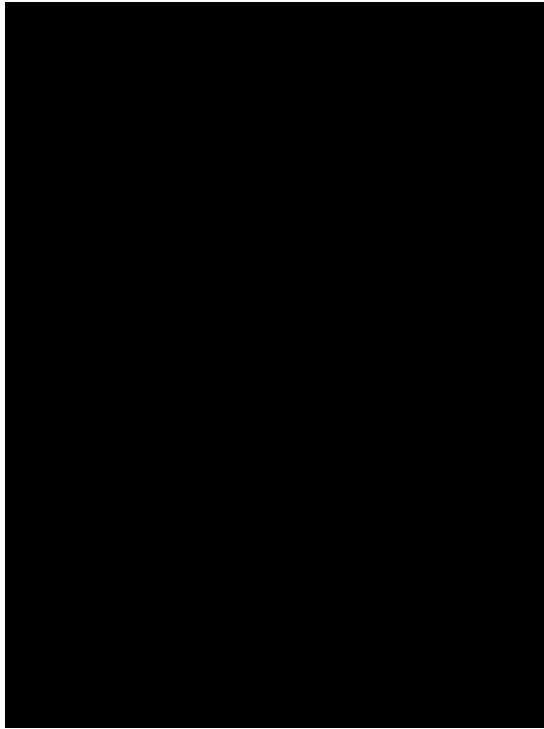
rubber tube, pamphlets, copper and ground minerals” and are synonymous with the elements of alchemy and ritual.

Beuys explanation of his intentions is the idea of the shaman to use material forms in unusual contexts to create transformation and change and in a way “therapeutic” (Art Observed 2011). He used felt and fat in his work to speak for his spiritual rebirth after his plane crash and rescue by Tartar peasants in World War II (Frampton 1996a, 168).

His work is cross-disciplinary such as performance, object art and installations. Beuys, through creative use of his mythological imagination and the “magical” manifests a symbolic language that can be understood by a culture.

In his installation work *The Accumulator*, Beuys uses symbolic language to express the prophetic dangers to mankind as a way of warning them (Kahn Academy 2011). Beuys promotes the notion of the individual mediating between their inner world and the inner world of humanity, like the shaman who bridges the spirit world or the world of the unconscious.

Beuys’s *Table with Accumulator* (Kahn Academy 2011) (Figure 22) reveals an assemblage, a table, box and two large balls of clay surrounded by large space in a white room.



**Figure 22:** Joseph Beuys, *Table with Accumulator* (1958–85), clay, wire, table, Google Images (Kahn Academy 2011)

The two large balls of clay are placed on the floor and connected with wires to two large screws on an old, square, hand-crafted box. Beuys used *The Accumulator*, the real-life function of which is to store electricity, however he juxtaposed this manmade object and connected it to the clay balls, symbolic of the earth, to create the notion of storing electricity from the earth as if by magic. His symbolic message portrays that relying on scientific enlightenment alone, humanity will overlook their connection to the “magical, mystical and miraculous” (Kahn Academy 2011).

In essence, he uses the artifact as a social cultural tool in which we can share our emotions and our beliefs.

His notions underpinning *The Accumulator*, influenced my work *Validation* where, in my process of aesthetic alchemy, I recognised the potential of keeping my emotive childhood memories of my grandmother and her spiritual energy alive and present, by sharing the underlying notions of life after death in an installation piece comprising of her cupboard and memorabilia.

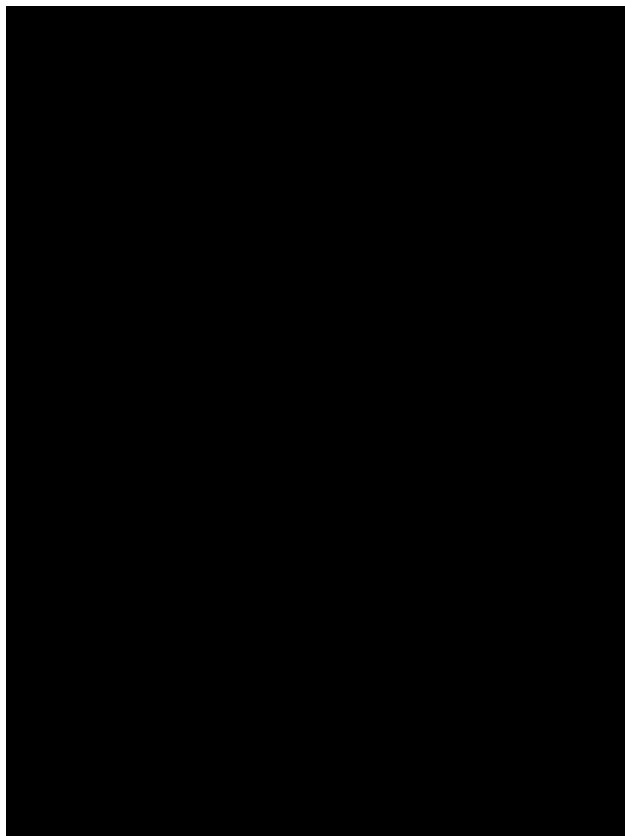
Beuys intention in his work *The Pack* (*Das Rudel*), served as a strong resonance and influence in the creation and intentions of my sand play installation, *Personal*

and *Collective Threads*. Sand play is associated with the ritual of play, role play and transformation. I see my sand play installation, comprising of my collection of manmade figurines and natural objects, as a way of 'mediating' between my inner world and that of humanity.

### **Ken Unsworth: balance between two worlds**

Ken Unsworth's work is greatly influenced by Beuys. Like Beuys, the notion of the magical, mystical and miraculous is suggested through the artist's juxtaposition of man made materials with nature.

Unsworth's notion of spiritual energy expressed in a magical way, has symbolically and materially influenced my work. His installation piece called *Suspended Stone Circle II* (Figure 23), was shown as an ephemeral installation exhibition in Gallery of New South Wales in 2013.



**Figure 23:** Ken Unsworth, *Suspended stone circle II* (1988), river stones, wire (Gallery of New South Wales 2013)

I was intuitively drawn to this piece by the richness of the aesthetic effects, such as the contradiction of heavy objects, for example the stones hanging suspended mid-air as if by magic, creating an overwhelming feeling of wonder and awe.

The way in which Unsworth has used the space, by placing it off-centre, yet accessible from all angles to the viewers, enables them to circle the installation, which is a meditative, spiritual act in itself. The way in which the stones are suspended by thin wires, with lighting from above, casts shadows underneath reflecting the blurred overlapping play of shadows that implies water underneath the stones. All these aesthetic elements give the installation an otherworld, spiritual feeling. The stones seem as if to balance by magic.

Unsworth notes in a NSW Art gallery video, *Stone Circle II*: “The moment you take an object out of its natural context and place it in another context suddenly its own inner voice can be heard.” I correlated this statement to Jung’s psychological interpretation of stones as having divine powers (Jung 1978, 217) thus interpreting Unsworth’s work to mean that by bringing the natural world and manmade world together the spiritual aspect of nature is felt.

As Unsworth strives to counter balance his space between the material and the immaterial world. *“Unsworth feels that by juxtaposing river stones in a contrasting context, he hopes that the difficult creative process expressed by the artist in the art work, that for the viewer, its inner strength produces within an individual person some unfolding of their inner soul or spirit.”* (Gallery of New South Wales 2013).

Unsworth’s work conveys more complex ideas about consciousness and is symbolic of the suspension between conscious and unconscious, between the material and the immaterial world (Unsworth 1988).

Psychologically, as suggested by Jung, the expression of the marriage of the union of opposites (the conscious and the unconscious) is manifested in symbolic form and indicates the balance between the inner and outer world.

It is Unsworth’s notions of transcendence and the mystical nature of the spiritual and the balance of all the aesthetic elements in his work *Stone Circle II*, which resonated and influenced my installation *The Pivot*. In particular, I hoped that by placing my



work off-centre that it would invite the viewers into a meditative circling of the wedding dress adding to a meditative experience.

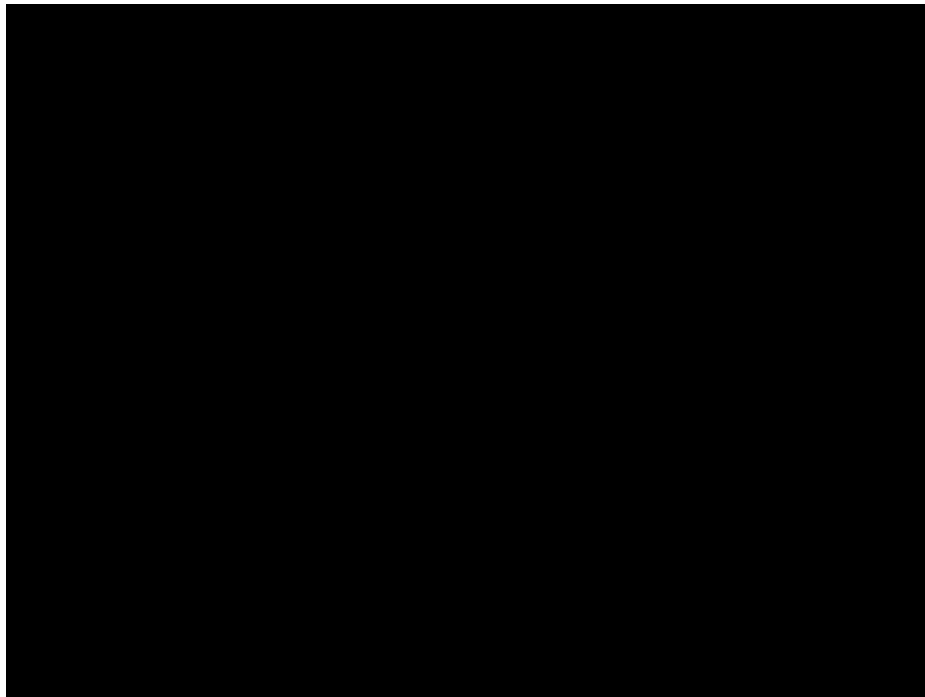
By repurposing my wedding dress, with my new-found installation methods of lighting, audio and space, my intentions, like Unsworth are to represent a mystical transcendent state of balance, thus defining the oneness of the ritual between the material and non-material worlds.

Myss notes that “the symbolic purpose of the ritual of marriage is to receive or bestow a blessing making sacred a union with oneself, symbolic of recognising and honoring the essential need to love and care for oneself in order that one can fully love another” (Myss 1997).

I saw the potential for my wedding dress installation, to represent the delicate balance between my conscious and unconscious as a symbol of the sacred marriage union between my conscious and spiritual *Self*.

### **Parastou Forouhar: The in-between space**

Forouhar, aspires to create similar transformative expectations with her lived experience in space and time, in her installation *The Writing Room* (Forouhar 2013) (Figure 24). She strives for a balance between emotion and memory in her own internal processes. She focuses on displacement. Her intention is that this will create contrasting feelings of disorientation yet a sense of beauty in the space (Evans 2013).



**Figure 24:** Parastou Faradour, *The Writing Room* (2013), (GOMA APT7 Installation)

In February 2013, I immersed myself in the experience of *The Writing Room* (2013). I was consumed with the beautiful decorative Farsi script that rhythmically adorned the white walls. As I stood to observe my surroundings from all directions, the childhood urge to whirl and twirl overcame me. I correlated this sensation to the feeling of confusion that I had portrayed in my paintings of the girl twirling and whirling on a cliff's edge.

The installation is immersive and sensory. Forouhor uses her own cultural references and life narrative to open up the spaces for creative work. The space is an interstitial space which uses Farsi script as a metaphor for her mother tongue, freeing it from its original meaning which had been much more important than the calligraphy itself, as Forouhor explains "so it just becomes a beautiful memory" (Evans 2013). The space and surface is also used as metaphor, as the writing explores its own direction across every section of the room.

In a discussion with a panel of artists on each of their works in 2013 at GOMA (Evans 2013), Forouhor explored how she sees herself being forced to live in another culture; how her displacement impacts on her internal processes of emotion and memory and where that leaves her in a state of 'in-between', both as an artist

and a 'displaced person' in exile. She discusses how she re-defines her *self* both within her work as an artist and her process as a person, (Csikszentmihalyi 1966).

Forouhor uses the space of "in-betweeness" to unite both internally and externally the tension of opposites, of anger and rebellion as well as sense of belonging. She explains: 'It's not just trying to redefine your belonging but trying to get rid of the rules that I have been brought up with' (Evans 2013).

She uses this space to expand the meanings and the relationships and try to locate herself within this in-between space and make it livable with her art. Vygotsky called it a "dynamic developmental state" that in the arts requires the artist to constantly move beyond the known, to push past his or her prior capabilities...sometimes this requires support and collaboration with others to achieve (Vygotsky 1971, 87).

Forouhor's notions of displacement and in-betweeness, resonated and paralleled with my lived experience of disempowerment. I correlated the resulting sensations and her process of making the space immersive kinesthetically for her audience, to the heuristic spiral processes in my practice, where there is a continuous interplay between *self* and space and artwork and where I continuously use the physical space and the art form as a way of bridging my feelings of disempowerment. I use the physical space and my symbolic art forms to express the tensions and to unite my inner world with my outer world, thus mediating my inner world with my audience. Similarly, like Forouhor, I redefine my *Self* both within my work as an artist and as a person.

The evolving themes and the notion of the spiritual transformation that surrounds the process of alchemy, symbolic birth and death cycle are apparent in each of the artists' works I have chosen to discuss in relation to my own creative work.

Martin, Millais, Kennedy (2011) and Derges (V&A Channel 2010 - 2011) in their texts and images evoke sensations and feelings of the universal meanings of alchemy in the elements of nature for the viewer, by using themes of death and re-birth metaphorically in their text and images.

Artists' book makers Juli Haas and Julie Chen, use the book format to evoke significant shifts in creative directions and their thinking processes, as well as those

of their viewer. While Haas uses visionary metaphor and 3D format to explore the multidimensional nature of the psychological space of the human psyche, Chen uses the sculptural layering of her 3D book format and the elements of nature to refer to the spiritual and the mysterious multidimensional nature of the psyche. Both draw the viewer on an inward journey in their work.

Beuys, Unsworth and Forouhar repurpose and recontextualise objects and materials and juxtapose space and object in an effort to express the tensions of alchemy of their spiritual, metaphysical or lived experience to affect some sort of aesthetic catharsis on the viewer.

Most importantly each artist expresses a powerful visionary metaphorical or symbolic language that opens up the space for the viewer and to engage the whole person in the experience. This process allows for individual discourse and interpretations within the space, thus acting as a catalyst for new thinking, in both a personal and collective way.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### Separation – Leaving the Shoreline

#### The Inward Journey: Intuitive Methodology

*“We shall not cease from exploring and at the end of all our exploring. Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time”*

T.S. Eliot, *4 Quartets* (as quoted in Martin 1955, 186)

During the exploration of methods for my creative practice in 2012, I met with a woman who ran sand play workshops for children. During my visit, the workshop had finished and some children were playing quietly with the sand and the miniature figurines. I observed one young girl in particular as she played intensely with the figurines and after a period of time insisted on her need to draw her impressions. She then constructed a 3D form relating to her previous play. As I observed the girl, I suddenly related the scene back to my own art making processes. This was significant because I realised that this is how I was using my art making process to refine and further transform my own perceptions in relation to my major life challenges. My major challenge, in essence, is to bring to fruition my ‘actual’ *Self*, not the ‘idealised’ or cliché *Self*. In this process, I was faced with the challenge of redefining and reconstructing my perception of reality. Inasmuch as I am reconnecting disowned parts of *Self*, by celebrating my differences and valuing intuition, imagination, story and ritual of play to claim ownership of my sacred *Self*. Through depicting my own struggle, there is a recognition of the struggle of others and thus connection of personal and collective shared values. To resolve this challenge my search is for a way of connecting my personal values and emotions to reference a community idea or notion so that my art practice could become a way of teaching or explanation.

Serig (2006) suggests that: “Artists use reflexivity to engage in the dynamic cycle of creating art to make meaning in order to make sense of the world and their place in it and that influential life experiences are often the impact and focus of this drive to create.”

## **Intuitive Criteria**

The main driver of my methodology is intuition. Anderson's term "Intuition" is defined as "direct perception of knowledge, often bypassing the other five senses and analytical reason...relates primarily to right-brain processes that mediate the perception of imagery, gestalts, patterns as different from left-brain processes that mediate linear thinking, logic, reason and analysis" (Anderson 2006).

Anderson (2006) explains that intuition comes in different modes of insight and describes them as intuitive criteria such as symbolic intuition; kinesthetic intuition; a sensory or body sensation or impression; empathetic intuition; a sensory mode of reading others emotional states and the intuition of negative past experiences; a sensitivity to emotional past hurts.

Most significantly Anderson defines symbolic intuition as intuition that is symbolic and archetypal perceptions in direct connection with the unconscious. Similarly Carl Jung (1978) and Caroline Myss (2001) define intuition as symbolic insight that presents possibilities beyond what is emerging, such as archetypal energies containing past memories, present experience and the possibilities of the future.

Anderson takes us further in explaining that the sensory modes such as kinesthetic; empathetic and intuition through our negative experiences promote and foster metaphorical thinking and problem solving within the art making process. Lakoff and Johnson, and Ortony note that practice-led research is a conduit for generative metaphoric thinking and diversity of methods used for problem solving (Gray and Malins 2004).

Murray Stein highlights the function of metaphor and symbols in relation to the psyche and describes the metaphor as being transparent by using the language of physicality and applying it to the psychic domain. He suggests that this is a way of thinking creatively, interpreting and expressing an experience that cannot be articulated literally (Stein n.d.).

Stein further compares the function of the metaphor to that of the symbols arguing that Jung's understanding of the term symbol, is that "it is opaque, and what is communicated to the conscious is not translatable in any other terms" (Stein n.d.).

Vannoy Adams argues that to define the essence of a concept is near impossible; because of abstract form and that the essence or the essential meaning lies in the image. The essence is revealed because the image of the artist is in a particular context, artwork's content and form. Hillman proposes that this is possible "because an image is a concrete content with distinctive qualities" and it's the actual qualities of the image that enable the defining of the essence through the Jungian methods of interpretation and active imagination (Adams 2013).

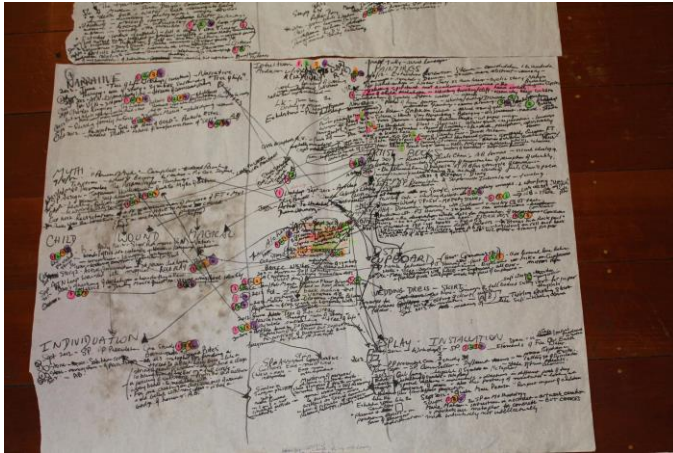
The process of intuitive inquiry in my creative practice is a heuristic process to work forward intuitively and reflect back. I am initially working with unformed materials and ideas such as paintings, cliff edges, and water and girl images as I am dealing with possibilities, which are not predetermined.

The possibilities of intuition, specifically symbolic intuition and the 'living myth' that is my conscious connection to patterns of childhood memories and emotional energies, are both triggers for the energies of my child archetype and mythological imagination.

## **Symbolic Intuition and Triangulation**

Carl Jung (1978), Joseph Campbell (1991) and Micheal Vannoy Adams (2013) suggest that the archetypal energies and the mythological imagination are the creative source of human experience.

Adams refers to the images derived from this internal process as transformational (Adams 2013), thus suggesting that we interpret and construct new meaning for ourselves, which can in effect continually change our perceptions and ways of living.

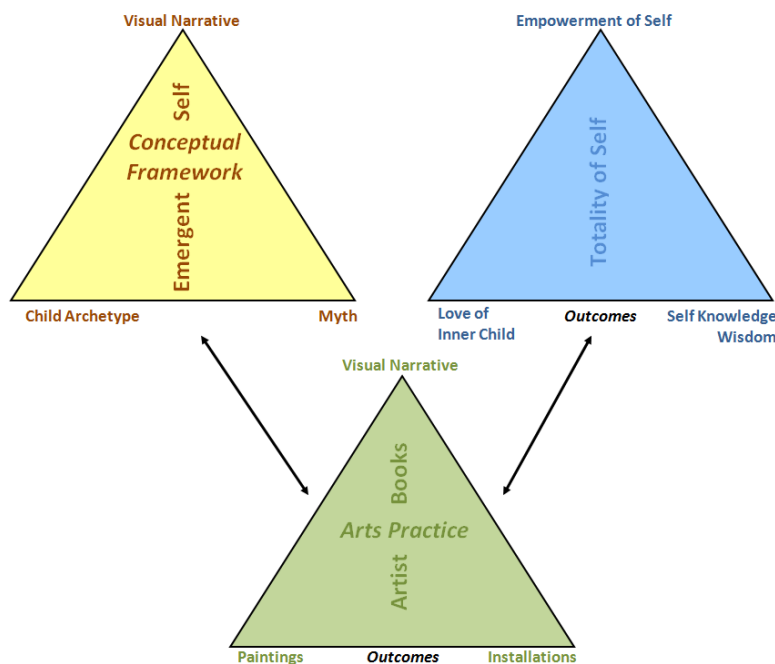


**Figure 25:** Susan Christie (2013), Mind Mapping and colour coding symbolic intuitive criteria (highlighted in pink)

The significance of symbolic intuition for my practice is that it engages abstract aspects of the archetypal unconscious to draw out the symbolic and mythic nature of my psyche. Symbolic intuition drives all aspects of my art making (see Figure 25) and is dependent upon contexts within my work such as theoretical, psychological, culturally creative frameworks and the epistemological nature of lived experience, synchronicity as well as the other artists notions and influences previously mentioned.

One of my methods is mind mapping (Figure 25). This method of categorising and colour coding assisted me visually to see how symbolic intuition dominated the other intuitive criteria and how it was related between the concepts, the *Self* and my practice. Analysis of my mind mapping led me to visualise diagrammatically *The Trinity* (Figure 26), a triangulation method which enabled me to comprehend and synthesise the different perspectives in my intuitive heuristic process.





**Figure 26:** Susan Christie, *The Trinity* (2013), triangulation of the creative practice

Simultaneously as I configured my triangulation diagram (Figure 26), I started to envisage and experience how the concepts, the *Self* and the artworks related and complemented each other on different levels. The heuristic process was revealed as I experienced the ideas bouncing back and forth, between the known notion or art form and the unknown inner knowledge, thus revealing the unknown inner knowledge as a new art form.

The heuristic method naturally encourages intuition as a primary mode of insight to expand and contract the focal depth of the different perspectives in the practice (Braud *et al.* 1998, 76).

Pattis Zoja cites Freud in his description of a child's way of thinking,

*“A child does not think linearly as the adult is capable of doing: thought, feeling, sensations, concept and memory are all inextricably interwoven. A child's thought is fluid and movement can take place on several planes at once. A*

*child's feeling is absolute in that any emotion, while it is present, holds the whole field of consciousness.” (Zoja 2011)*

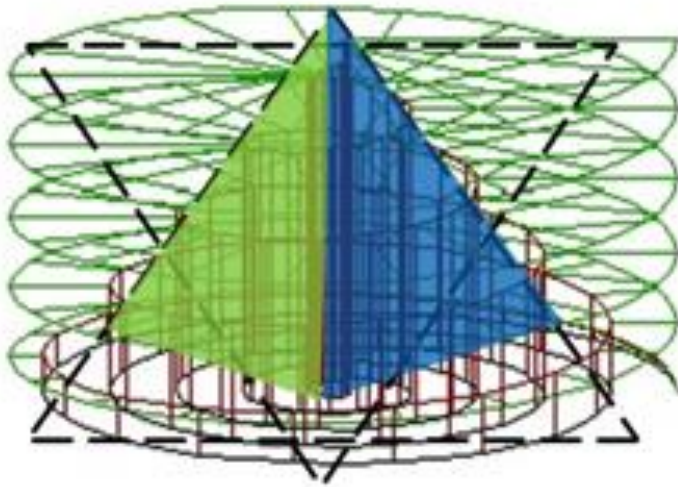
When reading this quote it struck me how this paralleled my inner heuristic process of consciousness when creating my artist book forms, the only difference being was that a small part of me was *self* consciously aware of this process of multidimensional thinking.

## **Intuition and Heuristic Research Design**

This heuristic way of processing using symbolic intuition as a lens is an inward and meditative experience. Through the various non-directive methods, I use self-dialogue and become one with the rhythmic flow as the “heuristic process moves from whole to part and back to whole again; experience to concept and back to experience” (Craig as quoted in Moustakas 1994, 16). This process manifests different aspects of the *Self* as forms of diarising or *Self*-referencing as the practice passes through the different phases of research.

The Heuristic approach as described by Moustakas is the ultimate immersive experience. One is able to get inside the question, become one with it and therefore achieve an understanding of it.

I recognise my ‘living myth’ as Moustakas’ *Internal Frame of Reference* and through *Intuition, Focus and Indwelling*, I experience and acknowledge Moustakas’ phases of heuristic research: Initial engagement, Immersion, Incubation, and Illumination; as the kinesthetic experience of the spiral as these phases appear in random succession throughout the practice, eventually being grounded in the artwork of my final exhibition.



**Figure 27:** Susan Christie (2014), *Heuristic Research Diagram*

I designed a diagram of the spiral as a research model in the form of a star shaped figure, (Figure 27), showing two intersecting equilateral triangles. This diagram was another way of clarifying consciously the process of being able to articulate the implicit.

In creating my research design visually, I deepened my understanding of my inward processes to figure out how my mythological imagination worked creatively, and how my embodiment was simultaneously involved in both process and final exhibition.

The significance for my practice of mythological imagination, and the non-directive image making methods such as the projective/reflexive methods of sand play, active imagination and role play is that they allow access to the unconscious realms and the non-critical creative aspects of the *Self*, which then challenges the critical conscious *Self* or as P.W. Martin calls it the “living myth”. The process of sand play removed me from the intensity of my practice, as a refuge where I could internally dialogue without the critical *Self* intervening.

In sand play, a dimension of spirituality is integrated into these psychological methods, whereby one is thrown back on one's own inner resources as a reflective meditative state in the context of sand play (Zoja 2011), (Pearson and Wilson 2001).

## **Sand play methods and critical examples**

The sand play methods have occurred at different stages of the heuristic process. The methods are comprised of Jung's amplification method and sand play method of active imagination.

The amplification method is a way of offering ideas that can be used as a means of extending the symbol, or to look for revealing personal images that might lead to self-discovery. It is an intuitive metaphorical process used in association with fairytales and myths to make the unconscious explicit (Hyde *et al.* 1992; Pearson *et al.* 2001).

The active imagination method, which employs role play dialogue, "allows the unconscious contents to be exposed in a waking state. This requires time to be given to the imagination, to bring to the conscious a story or fantasy in order for the content to be realised" (Pearson *et al.* 2001; Hyde *et al.* 1992). In order for this exposure to happen, "one must enter in the process actively with the imagination and the senses altogether, as if what is imagined is happening in the present moment in front of you" (Jung 1978).

I initially used the amplification process as a way into the creative practice. In the process of constructing images for my paintings in 2011, I chose a Hungarian fairytale, called, *Girl with the Hair of Gold*. This is a tale of resurrection (Pinkola Estes 1993). I found this tale in particular to be very relevant to that transitional period of my life (Appendix A).

As a method of exploring this allegory, I superimposed my visual timeline of child to adult transition (Figure 28) on to this fairytale, directly correlating and comparing the sequence of events and people in this period of my life to the different symbols found in the fairytale.



**Figure 28:** Susan Christie (2009–13) close up sample of time line: larger version of time line and pin board for writings, images, and reflections

The amplification method was instrumental in the profusion of material experimentation and led to the construction of the paintings *Estrangement I* and *Estrangement II* and *The Spell of Indecision* (mixed media).

In sand play this level of expression Pattis (2012) calls the “Allegorical level” of expression, which is a conscious level of the psyche, where the person needs to express their personal suffering.

Where the amplification method brings to consciousness the negative archetypal energies, I was looking for other methods, such as active imagination to explore deeper processes and levels of the psyche.

I developed my method of active imagination over several months. It was initially expressed in written form as a stream of consciousness story about my girl image and her journey. I wrote a series of four stories in different tenses. The last two stories were written in first person dialogue, as I became more self-aware that this girl image in my paintings was my inner child. The dialogue came about as I set up one of my paintings and spoke to the girl image. This personal dialogue was done in a meditative state, so as to allow the unconscious content to appear. In the dialogue with my inner child, she was explaining the meaning of the symbols I had produced in the paintings (see Appendices D and E). This process of active imagination enabled me to fish the unconscious for intuitive clues as how I was to proceed with the next stage of the journey.

The final role-play and dialogue was then used in the making of my Artist Book prototype. I engaged in further role play and imagined myself in miniature as I was

constructing the Artist Book prototype. I experienced a numinous moment as literally 'building my *Self*', or simultaneously as building a concrete form around myself as I projected from my imagination a visionary world around myself.

After the process of constructing the prototype book, I then re-engaged with the artist book, through the emotional reconstruction process of active imagination role play and dialogue, again experiencing myself visually inside the book, projecting my inner child on the journey. I experienced further numinous moments as the inner dialogues took place within my visionary world revealing further levels of *self*-awareness.

A truly numinous or transcendent moment occurred as I referred to Jung's research and personal reflections of his constructions of mandalas. Reflecting on my book form, I experienced myself visually, from above, looking down, circumambulating my book form. I recognised this level of expression as identified by Fox (2012) in sand play as the pre-symbolic level, where an individual expresses a really deep primal emotion as a concrete form in the sand and recognises it as a reflection of their inner mental state.

The books provided for me a neutral space and type of womb, which enabled me to process and synthesise the oppositional energies of the child archetype.

In effect, the most important significance of sand play to my practice are the notions of the sand tray being a neutral space to play and ground the oppositional energies. The importance for my creative practice is that I saw the possibilities and transferred this notion of play and the neutral space to a symbolic art form for imaginative purposes; creating an innovative art form to ground my oppositional energies.

Simultaneously, as I made the artists books, there was a conscious resolve to divest myself of the negative energies. This decision culminated in the creation of the symbolic wedding dress installation, being a paradoxical symbol carrying opposing meanings.

Jung acknowledges the power of the symbol as carrying opposite forces and in effect bridging the conscious and unconscious to take the individual beyond themselves to the spiritual and metaphysical realm (Jung 1978).

Every human being has a connection to his or her inner child through nature or spiritual belief. By accessing these archetypal energies through my creative practice, I experienced what Myss describes as “Sacrament of Confirmation”, (Myss 1997) where the spiritual dimension honours the *Self*, as the *Self* recognises through the practice and aesthetic art forms, the internal strengths such as the gift of creativity garnered from difficult experiences, thus creating spiritual resilience. In turn through my creative practice this gives me a deeper connectedness to others.

During this journey, this has meant acknowledging some very powerful and negative emotional energies, harnessing them constructively to express my own symbolic iconography.

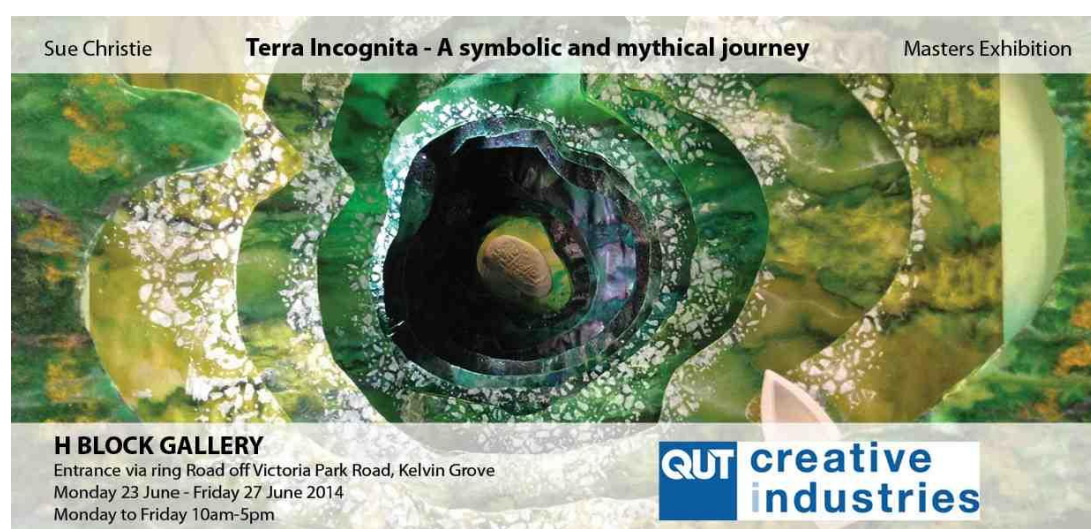
The heuristic phases of Explication and Creative Synthesis that Moustakas (1994, 31) describes will be discussed later in Chapter 3 in light of studio developments that came to bear from the preliminary and pilot exhibitions culminating in the final Master’s exhibition.

Jung and Campbell’s writings have lent credibility to my notion of the personal and collective nature of archetypal energies, mythical application to the *Self* and experience, and the value of intuition. These writings have led me to examine the language of symbols and how important they are for my creative processes and the connection to my embodied experience. Vygotsky’s writings on the social and cognitive aspects of creativity have illuminated the powerful effect of the aesthetic response and transformative value of art when it engages with emotion, imagination, lived experience, and play. These have provided a theoretical base to contemplate how rich symbolic artworks could represent evoke and make known and seen the unspoken and implicit personal and universal knowledge. My studio developments have documented the peaks and valleys, the light and shadows of my journey. These have been synthesised in the final exhibition.

## CHAPTER THREE: Struggle and Return – The Transformed Shoreline

### Preliminary (2011) and Pilot (2013) Exhibitions & Studio Developments

On 23–27 June 2014 I presented my final creative component of my research project in an exhibition called *Terra Incognita: A Symbolic Mythical Journey* in H Block Gallery QUT (Figure 29).



**Figure 29:** Susan Christie, Invitation, Final Exhibition (2014)

Practice-led research afforded me the flexibility and processes of refinement, whilst intuition and my creative unconscious afforded me transformational symbols and processes.

In the lead-up to my final exhibition, I produced two key exhibitions during the life span of my Masters Research project. The first exhibition, *Recollections of Journey's Past* (2011) (Figure 30) and the second exhibition, *A Visual Narrative: Terra Incognita* (Figure 31), were both held at 34 Arthur St, a venue in Fortitude Valley, Brisbane.





**Figure 30:** Susan Christie, *Recollections of Journey's Past*, Preliminary Exhibition (2011)



**Figure 31:** Susan Christie, *A Visual Narrative: Terra Incognita*, Pilot Exhibition (2013)

Both these exhibitions map different phases of my transformational journey, as they both contributed experiences in an evolutionary sense that fed my instinctive drive to make sense of significant childhood experiences.

I will highlight the critical events and insights of studio development of both exhibitions to create context for the critical insights and outcomes of my final exhibition.

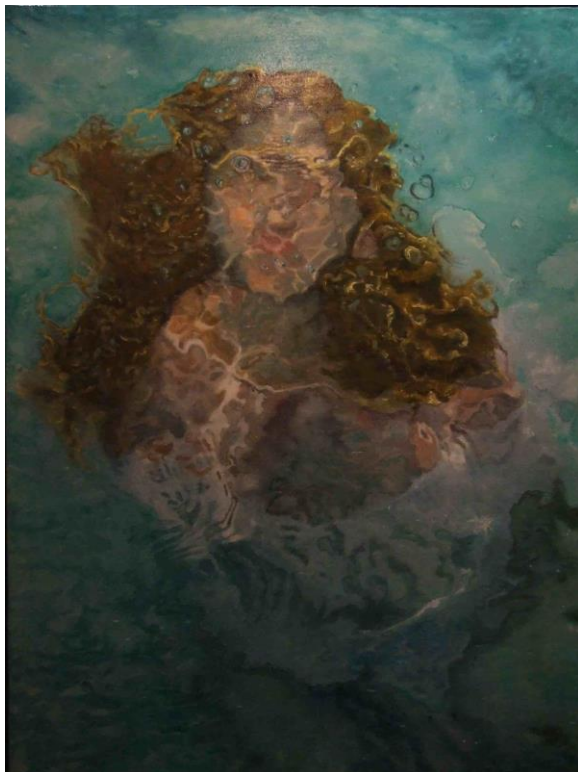
In 2011, *Recollections of Journeys Past* I used Pinkola' Estes' fairytale and Von Franz's notion of the fairytale's psychological structure as connected to the individual. I constructed a series of paintings examining feelings of anger, rebellion, powerlessness, and confusion.



**Figure 32:** Susan Christie, *Storms of Life I* (2011),  
paint, mixed media,  
152 x 101 cm



**Figure 33:** Susan Christie, *Will I? Won't I?* (2011), ink paint mixed media, 76 x 102cm & *Can I? Can't I?* (2011), paint, ink, collage, flocking, 152 x 101cm



**Figure 34:** Susan Christie, *Transformation* (2011), acrylic paint and ink, 76 x 102cm





**Figure 35:** Susan Christie, (2009) Photographic: girl, water images

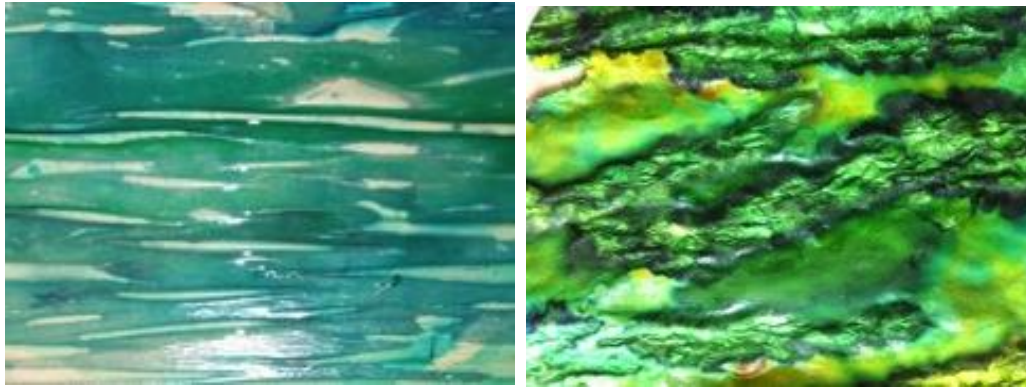
The representational works *Storms of Life I and II* (Figure 32); a series of 10 mixed media paintings of whirling twirling girls, such as *Will I? Won't I?* and *Can I? Can't I?* (Figure 33); a painting called *Transformations* (Figure 34), based on my photographic image (Figure 35) were significant as I became aware of over time how they suggested the unfolding notion of a metaphorical shoreline. The shoreline represents the edge of emerged and submerged in-between spaces. The idea is reflected in my reflective diary as I became aware of this notion:

*'...the oceans interconnectedness with other places....dreamtime places of childhood.....no time.....timelessness of childhood hours stretch into days...days into years' (Reflective Diary).*

Over time, simultaneously as I was expressing these disempowering energies of dying and restriction, I realised that I was instinctively exploring the new possibilities in my photographic image of my drowning girl (Figure 35). These possibilities presented themselves as I was instinctively and playfully exploring in digital media, the floating bubble forms within the photograph. I also became aware that these girl images were actually aspects of myself.

## Critical Events

Amplification of the fairytale proved to be a critical point for material development in the practice as I threw myself into intuitive non-directive child-like play with water and inks onto various paper surfaces.



**Figure 36:** Susan Christie (2009–12) Water and butcher paper experiments; Tracing paper experiments

These experiments (Figure 36) were different from the representational images of my paintings, and I realised they were material metaphors for my kinesthetic experience as a child when diving under the ocean, to ‘see’ what lay ahead in an effort to alleviate my anxieties of the unknown. The sensory memory of diving underwater reminded me how the visibility fluctuated with nature’s moods. These material experiments contributed to the development of the pages used in the construction of my artist’s books.

The large-scale works from this first exhibition served to give vent to the emotions of my ‘living myth’ and reveal the shadow energies thus providing the basis for the development of future symbolic forms.

As I progressed further with my research journey challenging my intuition, by exploring more deeply the emotional residue left over from childhood, I engaged and realised the benefits of working in a small space, discovered in my explorations of sand play. As the processes of sand play strengthened my intuitive processes, my choices and decision-making became more defined, as I decreased the scale of my works.

## Discovering empowerment – Transitions from 2D to 3D

Simultaneously as I explored and confronted the psychological tensions, I began to construct new sculptural artist books as places of deep meditative introspection. The physical tensions in the mechanics of the book making process, such as the relationship tensions between the spine and the pages were revealed as the book began to take form. During the construction, I became consciously aware of the emotional extremes of disempowerment and empowerment of my internal processes as I empathetically identified with the dialogue between the girl and myself in my active imagination, imagining her on the cliff edge diving into the unknown. I could sense the dichotomy of the energies in my fearful resistance of the psychological unknown, yet intrigued by the possibilities of the emerging art form that I was creating. Simultaneously in the process of intense resistance, I became consciously aware of the intense dialogue between my emerging unconscious images and my critical conscious beliefs as the psychological tensions alternated between trust and mistrust of intuition and my unconscious (Adams 2013).

In the process of making, time is lost and your whole mind body and soul is invested in the work. The feeling of emotional extremes when I was making the books was like the dual experience of the pain of childbirth and being in love, that going beyond *Self*. The experience of wonderment of the mystery of the cosmos, as you observe the child or object you have given birth to (Reflective Diary 2014).

Self-discovery in the act of transferring the emerging visual metaphors such as the water, bubbles, boat and shore line from the two-dimensional surface of the paintings and photographs and reconstructing them in three-dimensional form, brought about a significant shift in my thinking, embodied the tensions and created an internal balance within myself. The spaces inside my artist book form acted as a way of containing the tensions and harnessing the expansive energies in the previous paintings and photographs, which represented the energies of my 'lived experience'.

My reflective journal illuminates my revelations:

*In the making of the books, I recognised of the Opposites of the concepts, male and female, wounded (shadow) and magical (miraculous) paralleled the opposites of the spine and the pages. The rigidity, strength and the logical sequential reasoning of the masculine spine and the transparency/opacity of the paper and the fluidity of the color of the feminine pages – the many layers/pages of the book descending from the conscious to the unconscious realms to reveal the numinous sacred. The final realisation of the union of opposites that the spine cannot exist without the pages and vice versa.*

(Reflective diary, 2013)

The works from the preliminary exhibition were developed without any predetermined outcomes in mind however the shape and structure of my artist book was immediately visualised in image form, before it was made. By trial and error with existing materials, I made the form my own inner space.

The artist book afforded me a window into new installation forms for my practice. Installation forms that followed the artist books, such as *The Pivot* and *Validation* were also immediately visualised before they were made. They were created from personal memorabilia and collections that had memories and experiences attached to them from my transitioning years. The sand play installation, an interactive work *Personal and Collective Threads* was the most adventurous act in my exploration of the unknown. Its final form not fully realised until my final exhibition.

## **Installation: Challenging levels of self awareness**

The pilot exhibition *A Visual Narrative: Terra Incognita* in 2013, proved to be another significant turning point in my practice and process of self-discovery, inasmuch as it was developed from my need to create a toolbox for my symbolic language, it was also a reflection of expanding levels of inner self-awareness on the outer landscape of my practice.

Exhibiting this group of works addresses the struggle of connecting the different expanding levels of inner self-awareness to the outer landscape of my audience and exhibition space. I realised the significance of this exhibition was another phase of

my process of alchemy, as described by Jung's notion as forging the "totality of the Self".

I wanted to create a panoramic view of my collection of new works. I wanted the viewer to experience how I experienced simultaneously my inner world of heuristic processes and child like magical thinking. I wanted to create a sense of intimacy and closeness and wonderment as they stepped into this cluttered world of childhood inspired objects.

In installing this exhibition, I was thrown back onto my own resources, challenging self-trust in choices and decision-making, feeling the tensions of discomfort but triumph as I configured the forms and space, and initiated myself into sound and lighting processes. I correlated the experience of this exhibition to Campbell's interpretation and description of the mythical hero's quest in having to pass through three challenging transformations.

This process proved to be an enlightening experience and experimentation as I discovered how to 'paint' the space with sound, multimedia and lighting, so as to foreground certain aspects or works. Once the installation was complete, standing in the space I discovered the powerful presence of some of the works, however I felt because of the large amount of work exhibited and the shape and size of the exhibition space, these factors compromised the presence of the works. For example *The Pivot* needed to be free standing, to portray its commanding presence and for audience access, not placed near a wall. Further insights influenced my self-discovery process, such as on the opening night, the audience's positive reaction to the majority of my work apart from their difficulty negotiating the space.

Overall, the majority of works from this exhibition were significant and complete in the sense that my symbolic forms were shown to be effective in their ability to evoke self-reflection and childhood processes.

These critical insights and events from studio practice and both exhibitions are evident in this chapter as I use them experientially and reflexively to discuss my intentions, selections and positioning processes and revelations in the outcome of my final exhibition.



## **Final Exhibition: Terra Incognita: A Symbolic Mythical Journey**

Anselm Kiefer in an interview with the Royal Academy of Art in London, focusing on his upcoming retrospective in September 2014 reflects on his space for the exhibition: "Paintings change, artwork changes in the choice of space, audience reaction, it is all connected, it gives a new view of the work I've done and a new view for the future." (Royal Academy of Arts 2014)

The works featured in my final exhibition are an eclectic group of works in cross-disciplinary media, such as paintings, photographs, artist books and object-based installations. The majority had been previously shown and some refined from the pilot exhibition, however not all had been selected for this exhibition.

The works were scantily disseminated and grouped opposite each other in the main space.

Sound and lighting media had been altered to be items of memorabilia and memory, such as the wedding dress, my grandmother's cupboard and the sand play installation. These items had been physically and materially altered in different ways.

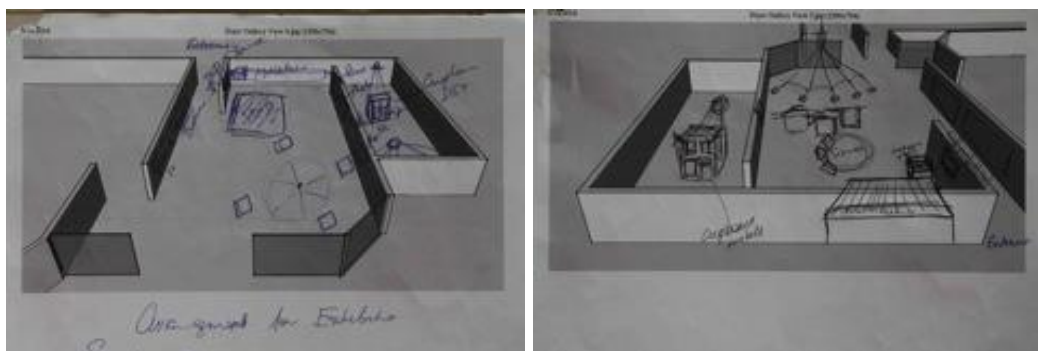
The two large paintings *Estrangement I* and *Estrangement II* hung together as a unit on the wall between the entrance and exits, whilst a smaller photographic work, *Reprieve*, stood apart isolated on the opposite wall. Two contrasting yet powerful works grouped together, were three artists books: *The Threshold*, *Oscillation* and *Emergence* and wedding dress, *The Pivot* a theatrical spectacle, were placed just off-centre and in front of the glass partitions at one end of the gallery, in full view of both entrances/ exits. Opposite these works in an intimate space of their own against the wall at the other end were placed the sand play installation *Personal and Collective Threads*. Another smaller installation *Validation*, was installed in the intimate space off the main gallery space.

### **The Installation process**

Just as the artist books were a significant the turning point in the transformation of my practice, so to are the considerations and experimentation of installing my work

in this gallery space, taking my 'living myth' to another level kinesthetically and psychologically.

In setting up for my final exhibition, my initial reaction to the space was this kinesthetic urge to whirl and twirl and experience in this space with a new found freedom. After this reaction, I stepped into the space and created drawings (Figure 37) of my idea and formulation of what I would select, how I would place the work and what it would represent. This was in contrast to my previous process of selecting and positioning in my pilot exhibition (Figure 38), where the intentions and full potential of the work both physically and psychologically was not realised or presented in its best possible light.



**Figure 37:** Susan Christie, 'Before' and 'After' Drawings of exhibition space (2014)



**Figure 38:** Susan Christie (2013) scaled-down version, 60 x 80 x 20cm; the 2013 exhibition space (2013)

I was more conscious of the potential of this space which had expansive white walls, immensely high ceiling containing a skylight, allowing the natural light in, giving the space a voluminous yet an light airy feel. The glass partitions at the rear end of the

gallery provided reflective qualities. A darker, smaller more intimate gallery space with a projection set-up was located at the opposite end to the glass partitions, off the main space.

The entrance and exits were opposite each other and because they had a binary function, depending on which one people entered or exited, part of the space became a thoroughfare. This passageway from outside to the other side of the building, was in effect I realised a metaphor for the gallery as a transitioning space, as it was indeed for my practice and myself.

I was aware now from the previous exhibition how the space, lighting and arrangement of these works dictated how the viewers moved around in the space and how they viewed the work individually and overall.

The significance of seeing the work again in a new exhibition space afforded me the benefit of making more insightful connections to the elements in the work themselves and how they related to the other pieces in the installation. The process has not only enabled me to formulate why I selected and positioned the works, but the constant revelations from reflecting on the exhibition as a whole has been enlightening, surprising and mind-altering.

In this exhibition for example I hung the wedding dress centrally yet off-centre (Figure 39), in the highest space within the space. After much trial and error and moving the work around, I placed three artists books in a V shaped formation with the point toward the wedding dress (Figure 40). This configuration was not how I envisaged it in my drawings (Figure 37). I was amazed and delighted how this subsequent relationship opened up relationships with the other art forms. It opened the space outwards towards the sand play installation. It also mirrored the triangular shapes in the dress and the open V-shaped covers of the three artists' books, which I then at that time interpreted as birds flying across the space.



**Figure 39:** Susan Christie, *Pivot* (2014), wedding dress (off-centre), pumice stones, fishing line, Final Exhibition



**Figure 40:** Susan Christie, Triangulation of artist books, *Threshold, Oscillation and Emergence* (2014), 34 x 36 x 56cm Final Exhibition

In this new space, the wistful tones of *Valtari* emanated from inside the wedding dress, permeated the air and emphasised a direct connection to the emotional atmosphere of the spiritual 'other' world that I wished to create. Music has developed as an integral part of my practice and has often opened portals for my imagination beyond the image. I parallel this notion to Kandinsky (1977, 14) who indicates that "the spiritual darkness, the insecurity of ignorance and fear pervade the world in which it moves and that music, art and literature are the three notions that feed his inner world to alleviate the spiritual darkness".

As I stood and surveyed the works in the space, referencing them to my journey, I realised the shorelines, water and submerged spaces featured significantly in this work. *Estrangement I* and *Estrangement II* had large, expansive spaces of water and sky creating a horizon line. A small boat floated from the horizon line on the surface of the water, in a direct diagonal line off the canvas, indicating the idea of the shoreline of my childhood. The photograph *Reprieve* showed submerged and trapped spaces underwater. The artist's books had the subliminal overtones of deep water in the spine and pages, indicating the submerged depths or abyss of my psyche, and the wedding dress expressed images of mythical fantasy. I also paralleled these submersions to purification in water process of alchemy. The sand play installation *Personal and Collective Threads* had the tactile and interactive qualities of the physical shoreline, indicating the new shorelines of possibilities in the sand play installation.

In this new space, I strategically placed my various art forms to suggest the timelessness of the imaginative world of childhood and also to express a formative rite of passage as a journey, based on my memories and experiences of my story of child to adult transition. The rituals, stories and experience of Stradbroke Island empowered my innate personal values yet returning to the mainland these were constantly brought into question.

Inclusive in my initial rites of passage are stories that define who I am. Clandin and Connelly (quoted in Brushwood Rose *et al.* 2013) regard *storytelling and restorying of our lives as not only a fundamental human experience but a "fundamental method of personal (and social) growth"*. Building on Mitchell and Polkinghorne notions of narrative knowing, they expanded on and "gave the term narrative by redefining it as

the ‘structured quality of experience to be studied’” (Brushwood Rose *et al.* 2013, 218).

Stories make our lives meaningful and coherent. “May used the term *personal myth* to mean what [Polkinghorne] called *the self narrative*. May defined personal myth as a *particular group of symbols that are configured into a pattern that captures “more or less” universal form of human experience* (Polkinghorne 1991, 145). Memory and experience are two important ingredients in this narrative of reconstruction of self. McAdams (2003) points out that it is self-narrative that selects and interprets certain memories for self-definition and sense of purpose, to make sense of the present by surveying the past and anticipating the future. McAdams argues that identity choices are not a matter of “free choice” of memory and that it is “well documented” in the occurrence of the memory bump. He further states evidences that major recall of episodic memories by adults are from the period of adolescence, because this is the time when “people are most preoccupied with forming identity” and this is the time that is “especially rich in emotional and motivational content”, thereby colouring their choices of memory to “formulate life stories” that they need, to “face the psychological challenges” (McAdams 2003, 196).

My creative practice, heuristic processes and open-ended *Self-narrative*, in effect, enables me to explore, through a series of artistic rituals, these psychological spaces. Thus the practice becomes a vehicle for a transitional rite of passage to complete meaningful self-discovery. The creative practice as a rite of passage allows me to become fully aware of my personal and collective responsibility to myself and community as a person and an artist. The creative process pushes my personal psychological boundaries and opens up this place or space for further connection, reflection, exploration and engagement with the wider audience. Consequently audiences may identify and engage with their own social and cultural perceptions and dialogues.

In realising my intentions of exploring my feelings of joy and frustrations behind these paradoxical art forms, I wanted to re create a transitional space where I could empathetically share my journey and engage the viewer with their own struggles, ambiguities and revelations along the way. I wanted to take the viewers on their own

experience of their inner child and self-discovery, affecting an aesthetic catharsis (Connery *et al.* 2010).

For my intentions to be realised for my audience I became conscious that the different works needed to be viewed from different perspectives such as a child-like perspective.

Even though I experienced the majority of these works as an inward journey and places of extreme discomfort and intense joy, a number of the viewers commented that though there was some sense of struggle and sadness in some of the works, overall the installation was likened to a journey into a child-like world of fantasy and imagination. Even in the installation of my works, there was a sense of a push–pull effect as I installed the pieces in the space, especially with the artist's books and my grandmother's cupboard with its contents of memorabilia. I sensed, in the installation process, that I was torn between whether I was showing enough or too little. Would people understand what I was trying to express? This large space gave me a feeling of much freedom, but also of vulnerability.

In the space I wanted my paintings *Estrangement I* and *Estrangement II* to cry out the deep inner pain of the aloneness and alienation coming from the 'nothingness' of the abyss. In order to support the intention and express the extreme confusion and indecision experienced by my fear of the abyss - a fear that kept my creative practice in a state of 'limbo' for years - I created new works, *Spell of Indecision I* and *Spell of Indecision II* (Figure 41).

*Spell of Indecision I* and *Spell of Indecision II* were based on my twirling, whirling girls from the preliminary exhibition. I created a canvas diptych, where I stripped back the literal translations expressed in the previous works. I employed charcoal stick, outlining several ghostly female figures silhouetted on a stark cliff's edge against a mysterious green sea suggesting the sinister darkness of the abyss. This was to signify the emerging alchemy that was taking place in the work. I used the cliff line and the transparent twirling whirling ghostly female figures to express the physicality of my childhood fear and confusion of disempowerment.



**Figure 41:** Susan Christie, *Spell of Indecision I and II* (2014),  
paint, ink, charcoal, lace 152 x 101cm

I realised from feedback on my pilot exhibition, the struggle was in my process and there was obviously a gap between what was intended and how the viewer interpreted the work. I wanted this work to capture and support the metaphysical experience of my shadow in the state of limbo. I needed the audience to feel these extremes of emotion. I paralleled this state to Pinnock who indicates that in the separation phase of indigenous rites of passage, one belongs in neither one world nor another (Pinnock and Hamilton-Douglas n.d.).

The exhibition relies on the effect of the ambiguous tensions of the symbols, which arises when trying to express the implicit. In experimenting with the process of choosing, grouping and moving around my work, I realised in distilling the essential energies for each of the creative works that the symbolic work with most distinctive and potent content opened the work up to dialogue diversely with the other works and the audience.

I discovered in my process of sand play, how I wore, via emotion and imagination, the energies of the archetype like a mantle or a role and expressed this through my choices and the personal and collective expression of the symbols (Marie Makinson).

In essence, my artwork wears these mantles of the child archetype in my final exhibition, as a way of evoking an emotional and imaginative response for the audience.



## ***Estrangement I and Estrangement II and Reprieve***

In this exhibition I wanted the work to create a feeling of being overwhelmed and surrounded by powerful destructive energies yet insignificant and powerless, like a child, echoing the notion of separation and abandonment (Tacey 2012).



**Figure 42:** Susan Christie, *Estrangement I and II* (2011), paint mixed media 152 x 101cm



**Figure 43:** Susan Christie, *Estrangement I & Estrangement II* (2011), paint acrylic mixed media (close up) 152 x 101cm

Viewing them in the space, initially, I thought the boat was directionless, however it appeared on the horizon and it was navigating in a direct line, from one canvas across to the far edge of the second canvas (Figure 43). The bird gliding silently, suggests land close by. I realised I had metaphorically initiated the notion of the shoreline and the dangerous journey of transitioning between shorelines, thus mapping the allegorical level of my journey (Zoja 2011).

I instinctively chose the large wall space that was a thoroughfare between the main entrance and exit (Figure 42). I hung them just above eye level, so viewers were looking up, as would a child, and could get the impending sense of the work, thus highlighting the duality of the tensions. John Martin's work was hung in the Tate Gallery in London in this way.

Despite my strong urge to include *Spell of Indecision I* and *Spell of Indecision II* in this new space, I realised after much deliberation, and moving the work around, the work was not engaging the feeling of confusion and limbo of the inward journey. However it reiterated metaphorically, as in *Estrangement I* and *Estrangement II*, the notion of travelling the shoreline, and the dark mysterious water.

I realised that, despite my intentions, that it wasn't necessary because the sensations of circling and whirling and twirling of the inward journey, was reiterated in the artist's books. In fact, this experience was also echoed in other works such as in the circle of sand in the sand play installation and in the flare of the wedding dress.

Already conscious of the distinctive gifts of the symbol, I felt that the distorted image of the drowning girl in *Reprieve* (Figure 44), who was surrounded by water and bubble shapes, was both expectant but despairing. My original photograph had been taken in a playful moment, prior to my research, of a young 18-year-old relative of mine. Initially I felt it had symbolic possibilities. As referenced previously, in the initial altering of this work in 2012, I experienced the most incredible sadness, which correlated to a sense of dying. I correlated this notion of sadness yet hope in the implicit quality of Kennedy and Derges concept of water as being the giver and taker of life. I correlated Derges idea of using water to distort the photographic image representing the metamorphic evolution of change. I also correlated this image of the water and the bubble, to which I interpreted as the soul breath giver of life, to Jung's notion of the purification process of water in alchemy, as being the liberation of powerlessness.



**Figure 44:** Susan Christie, *Reprieve* (2013), inkjet photo 115 x 90cm

After much deliberation, experimentation and discussion I chose to place this work on the opposite wall to my paintings, on its own. I realised that the other photographic works were iterative and did not express the dichotomy of tensions. Standing back I became conscious that in placing this work in such an expansive space emphasised the notion of drowning and being overwhelmed. It also became apparent that the faint bubble shape was indeed suggestive of new ideas and notions bubbling up in my unconscious, ready to be born.

Elucidating the tensions of the work discussed above, I realised how the space between the works facing each other on opposite walls opened up the visual dialogue between them. I also became aware of the ambiguous tensions in images and material. The paintings cried out their loneliness and powerlessness to the significant other across the space suggesting that this gap could be indeed the abyss? These contrasting tensions related to experience and memories from transitions in formative years. How do I express in this space what is in the abyss of nothingness? Yet moreover, how do I leap into the unknown, into new media, forms and spaces and resolve or communicate disempowerment or empowerment? I wondered if my audience would sense the tensions and divide as such and feel the separation, ensuing struggle and transformations.

Members of the audience expressed that they felt themselves drawn into both the paintings and photograph. The paintings gave them an overwhelming tangible feeling of being “surrounded by ocean and air” and of being alone as they were drawn into the work. Some connected travelling from the mainland to Stradbroke Island to this sensory experience. Viewers standing in the space and viewing the photographic work sensed the separateness and being surrounded by water.

### ***The Threshold; Oscillation and Emergence***

Symbolism and experience are the keys to the implicit communication in my work. These symbolic art forms act as my visual language of emotion and imagination loaded with multidimensional meaning. The previous works discussed are metaphorically transparent through physical comparison with the elements of nature. The nature of my inward journey of my psyche is dark, nebulous and abstract. The three oversized books – *The Threshold; Oscillation and Emergence* (Figure 45) – developed later in the practice, sat on the gallery floor neatly encased in their clear Perspex pulpits with the soft natural light of ‘God’, falling upon their faces.



**Figure 45:** Susan Christie, *Threshold; Oscillation and Emergence* (2013), artist's books, unique, tunnel format, mixed media, miniatures 34 x 36 x 56cm

In this space they held their covers open and out like arms held up in silent prayer, waiting patiently to draw the viewer into their dark, sensory and mysterious spaces, abundant with colour and texture. I feel drawn to these books time and time again.

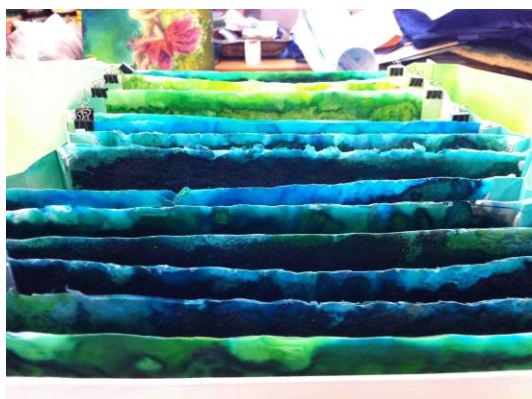
They are concertina books, square in shape with fourteen pages inside. In each page, a cut-out, irregular, circular shape appears. My intentions were to create visually, the internal confronting dialogue between the shadow and miraculous child energies. The overall original intention of making four books was to depict different transformational phases in each of the books. My intention was visually to bring to my conscious an acceptance and acknowledgement of my miraculous child.



The textures of the paper and random variegation of my colours, which ranged from yellow greens (shoreline; shallow water) to aqua blue (mid depths) and blue black (deep depths), are indicative of the emotional fluctuations which parallel underwater terrain, with its nooks and crannies and difficult places (Figure 46).



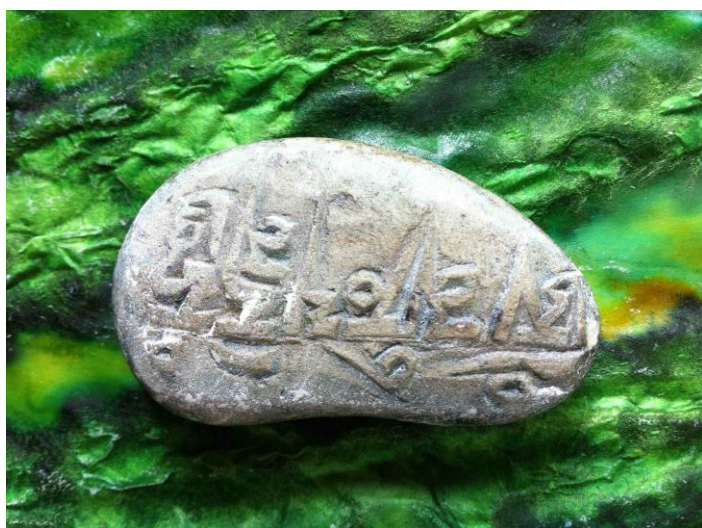
**Figure 46:** Susan Christie, *Emergence* (2013), book spine example, 34 x 36, 56cm



**Figure 47:** Susan Christie, artist book pages (2013), carborundum examples, 34 x 36 x 56cm

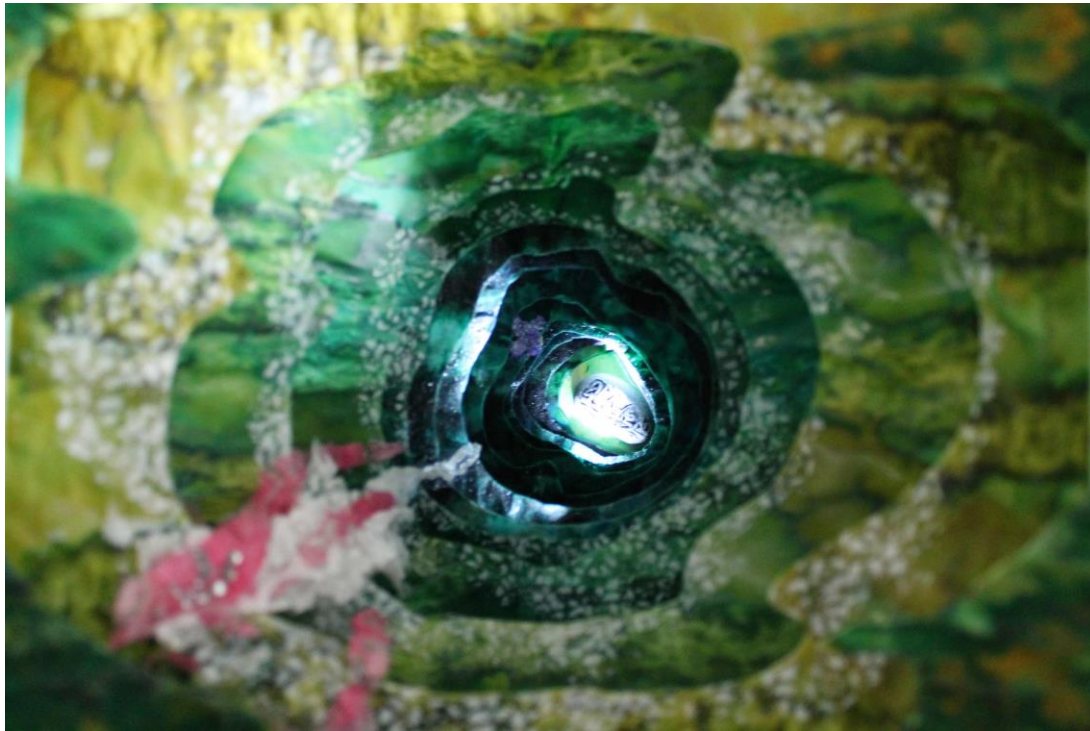
The darkest pages have been sprinkled and brushed with carborundum, creating a dark sandpapery surface implying resistance to the transformation process (Figure 47). The lighter pages imply enlightenment, possibility new ideas and integration of that knowledge.

At the bottom inside each book is a clay replica of the original carved stone gifted to me in my initiation into sand play (Figure 48). In each book I altered the stone's surface either carving more deeply, or nearly obliterating it, or changing its face completely. The use of the stone is referenced earlier from Jung's research and notion that stones were frequently depicted images of the *Self*.



**Figure 48:** Susan Christie, carved stone gifted (2008), 7cm, from initial sand play process

In effect, my original intention was to depict these changes on the surfaces as reflections of the inner *Self* through the transformational phases (Figure 49).



**Figure 49:** Susan Christie, *The Threshold* (2013), artist book (unique), non-linear, tunnel format mixed media, miniatures, 34 x 36 x 56cm

I loved the beauty of these books and my initial response to the completion of my first book was mixed feelings of breath taking awe yet incredulous disbelief. Yet in the making, I oscillated between torment and elation.

On another level, in the installation of these forms, I could feel the tensions, yet again of having to choose what to show, and what to leave out, implying courage yet vulnerability. Simultaneously I felt protective of these forms yet proud. I paralleled my process of making these forms with Jung's notion of the alchemical stone (the lapis) as something everlasting, which cannot be dissolved. He compares it with the alchemist idea of the mystical experience of God within one's own soul. He parallels this notion psychologically, as an experience of suffering which turns one in upon oneself, so that the *Self* becomes one's own inner partner (Jung 1978, 226).

Chen's intentions of challenging the notion of the book, yet creating a deep experience for the viewer, afforded me the insight that I had paralleled this affect in my artist books. Likewise in manifesting my book form I had substantiated Juli Haas



notion of the shift in thinking when changing from two-dimensional to three-dimensional forms. I further realised looking at these forms in their relationship to the other works, that they were neither paintings, photographs, nor sculpture. They were in-between forms, in an in-between space, in between two shorelines.

After much deliberation and experimentation, self-questioning and discussion with experienced others, I became more conscious of the reasons behind my selection from my discussions. I chose three out of the four artists books and positioned them slightly off centre, in the formation of an open triangle with the point directed at *The Pivot*. The three books in a triangular formation reflected both the heuristic process I experienced in my making processes and paralleled the heuristic diagram for my methodology. This formation expanded the in-between space in all directions, connecting implicit relationships to the other reconfigured objects such as the cupboard and the sand play installation.

I had previously placed them on plinths in 2013, however, in this space I placed them on the floor, as I realised it was better access and engaged intimacy of viewing.

Viewers described being drawn into these books time and time again, commenting that they were so engaging because of the different structural layers, textures and colours. They sensed the dichotomy in the works, however, some viewers who had seen my artists books in the pilot exhibition reiterated the same comment as then, that even though they could sense some dark soul searching, they perceived an overwhelming sense of peacefulness, not the struggle of which I spoke.

The audience response to the work in this space, to my intentions, selection and installation processes, was much clearer and more defined. Further investigations, in response to the audiences' love affair with these books, revealed to me that it is not just the spine and the pages and what lies within that is the initial attraction and continuing engagement. It is the circle and square shape of the book. Jung suggests that a contradiction can only be understood as a symbol and that the circle is a symbol for the *Self* (psyche) and the square is the symbol for earth bound matter (Jaffe 1978, 283) and that when they come together they are a contradiction in themselves. This in turn creates a tension needing to unite both the opposing shapes

(Jaffe 1978, 272). This suggested to me that it is this inner need to unite the two opposing shapes that causes the fascination with these books.

My two signature pieces, metaphorically speaking, were the jumping point from the relative safety of a two-dimensional practice, into the unknown, three dimensional, immersive, multisensory, ephemeral world of installation practice. I realised now, how relevant the installation space and forms are to the aesthetic catharsis. I have already drawn parallels earlier in *Reprieve* from Kennedy's and Derges creative catharsis and Vygotsky's notion of aesthetic catharsis, I am also interested in paralleling object-based installations such as Unsworth's *Stone Circle II* to my notion of transformative experience of *The Pivot*.

## **The Pivot**

My original intentions when creating the Pivot came about simultaneously and synchronously. I wanted to express visually the transcendent experience I had of floating above and circumambulating my artist book. I wanted to express as a spiritual form, the integration of the emotional energies I had experienced in the artists book process. In 2013, as I intensely experimented unsuccessfully with another art form, I suddenly let go of my focus and glanced at my photographs and instantly saw, the floating wedding dress worn by my drowning girl. I had this sudden revelation of the spiritual yet worldly meaning of the ritual of marriage and immediately saw my wedding dress as a symbol for expressing the alignment of the *Self* and consciousness. Jung speaks of this alignment as the union of opposites. My intention for *The Pivot* (Figure 50) in this space was to create an otherworldly spiritual feeling.



**Figure 50:** Susan Christie, *The Pivot* (2014), wedding dress, pumice stones, fishing line, audio

This ethereal floating form was hung from the highest point in the space, dramatic in its presence, yet grounded invisibly with white fishing line and pumice stones. It was framed by the gallery's glass partitions in the background. The overhead natural light created a ghostly reflection in the glass partitions during the day. The artificial light emanated from the pregnant like belly of the dress and created a mystical illumination casting a blurry circular shadow on the floor underneath. The otherworldly feeling was even more heightened by the sound tracks by Valtari. In contrast with the installation of 2013, the music and light was installed in the belly of the dress, which seemingly came from this 'other' place.

The band, Sigor Ros, calls the language the band uses a "form of gibberish vocals that fits to the music". This notion suggested to me that the music is paramount in communicating with emotions and the notion of gibberish is used to highlight the music's direct meaning with their audience (Hansen n.d.).

In creating these sound tracks, the band had been intensely experimenting with other ideas unsuccessfully. In letting go their focus, something happened and music

started to emerge ("Valtari" 2014). I drew this parallel to the manifestation of my work *The Pivot*.

I also draw parallels to film regarding image and music in the work of Sally Potter's *Orlando* and how Potter points out that "music can make visible to the inner ear certain things that remain invisible in image. It opens the door to another world" (Potter 2004).

At night, the interplay between the muted light from the gallery space and from inside the dress created multiple reflections in the glass partitions, with the dress casting a defined patch of light underneath on the floor. This created the illusion that the dress was floating, yet frozen in time, like a photographic still.

Viewing *The Pivot* (Figure 51) from all angles and through the glass partition when installing, paradoxically gave the work a feeling of timelessness of a fourth dimension, yet an almost theatrical feeling of a shop-front display.



**Figure 51:** Susan Christie, *The Pivot* (2014), wedding dress, pumice stones, fishing line, audio

Like Unsworth, my artwork uses material objects taken out of context, creating a contradiction for the viewer. Similar to Unsworth's *Stone Circle II*, the flare of the open dress was circular and held in place by fishing line and natural materials. The overhead light created a mystical interplay of shadows and reflection. Unsworth's work observes the spiritual through nature and is angular and abstract with masculine overtones. Like Unsworth, I have clear spiritual intentions, however the ritualistic, feminine and procreative overtones are evident. Furthermore this transformed object created a physical and affective multidimensional relationship with the viewer as it hovered above the artists' books and the viewer, creating somewhat of a theatrical spectacle.

It reminded me of when I first saw the dress in a shop-front alcove in the early '80s. It was a reminder of the 'fairytale' of marriage.

The significance of seeing my two key cornerstone pieces again in a different space elucidated my intentions for these forms. I had originally grouped them together. I wanted to afford them centre stage in this space, to emphasise the transcendent nature of the work and create a metaphysical experience for the viewer.

When placing the three artists books in front of *The Pivot*, I noticed that when viewing the artists' books, it emphasised diametrically opposed perspectives for the viewer. When viewing the artists' books, the viewer would be drawn into the space in an intimate way, like a child, then in looking up become involved from a childlike perspective of the dramatic spectacle of the wedding dress and mythical notions of the 'fairytale' wedding.

I felt in this exhibition, all the works, specifically my two signature pieces, had made clear in an intuitive sense my struggle and transitions, essentially what my disempowerment had kept in limbo.

When I looked at these two works and their relationship to the other works in this space, I was cognisant that they appeared from the in-between submerged spaces between the shorelines and instead of just expressing the feelings of empowerment and disempowerment, I had acted as a birth mother in some ways, creating new unfamiliar forms and recreating old forms. In effect what transitioned out of the in-between space or abyss of nothingness, were these new non-representational forms

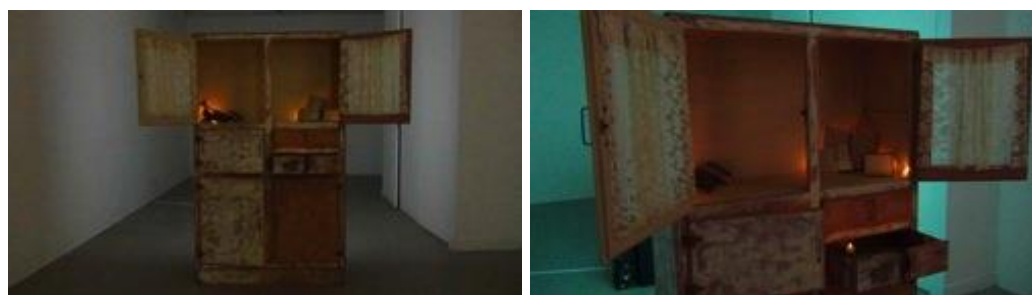
from my individual experience, thus mapping the Symbolic phase of my journey (Zoja 2011). It occurred to me that this space was my rebirthing space.

Viewers commented that *The Pivot's* presence felt awe inspiring, and in this exhibition it conveyed a clearer message. A number of viewers also connected their own memories and commented how the music and lighting gave the dress this ceremonial almost religious feeling of floating upward, yet at the same time evoked notions of a fairytale fantasy of marriage, with its disappointments and sadness.

I will now discuss two further installations simultaneously inspired by the artists books and the wedding dress, *Validation* and *Personal and Collective Threads*.

## Validation

*Validation* (Figure 52) is an installation of precious personal objects including worn bibles, several ornate silver hairbrushes and two strands of plaited hair. The bibles and hairbrushes were held and positioned in the upper parts of my grandmothers old airing cupboard, whilst the hair was positioned in and hanging out and over the open drawer below. Several faux candles back-lit each of the group of precious objects. The light surrounding the hair gave off a sense of spooky animation (Figure 53) (The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism 2010). Further faux candles, partially hidden in the lower part of the cupboard gave off a glimmering effect, like a fireplace. The cupboard sat just inside, facing the entrance of the small, darkened, intimate room off the main space, like a mystical memory or a place of worship. A fluttering sporadic backlight lit the cupboard. This occurred when the digital story was projected onto the back and in effect spasmodically silhouetted the cupboard, suggesting fragmented memories (Figure 54).



**Figure 52:** Susan Christie, *Validation* (2014), cupboard, human hair; brushes, bibles, lace 163 x 97 x 36cm



**Figure 53:** Susan Christie, *Validation* (2014), hair and lace (open drawer)



**Figure 54:** Susan Christie, *Validation: Pearls of Wisdom* (2014), digital story, projected onto back of cupboard

My original motivation for this work was to create a holding space for positive memories of my ancestors, an accessible place for my personal meditation, like a place of respite. Prefaced by the pilot exhibition, where the cupboard and digital story appeared separately, my intention was to combine them to appear together in this space. I wanted to create a personal and collective ‘shrine’ to my female ancestors, visually acknowledging their strengths. I wanted to manifest a feeling of spiritual presence of my past memories.

In the installation process, I chose this space for its functional and intimate qualities. There was much deliberation, discussion and experimentation with positioning and placement of the cupboard in different angles inside the space. The similar process was conducted with the positioning of lighting; audiovisual projection on the back and sidewalls and adjustment of sound so as not to interfere with the audio in the main gallery. This was a playful process. Experimentation with the different types of lighting inside my cupboard resulted in choosing faux candlelights, which gave a feeling of childhood memories. Referencing Beuys’ notion of using natural materials

to store emotional energy, there were no particular artists whose work visually influenced this work. Visual presentation referenced to my worldly travels, such as Buddhist shrines in Asia or shrines along the roadside in some European countries in memory of their dead.

My digital story *Pearls of Wisdom for my Children* had been slightly altered for this space. Originally in the 2011 space, with my singing performance group, we performed *Wanting Memories* from the album *Still on the Journey* by the band Sweet Honey in the Rock. In my final exhibition, I overlaid the digital story with the musical introduction and ending from the group performance, adding a wistful sound to the atmosphere.

In experimenting with the audiovisual on the back of the cupboard (Figure 54), I noticed the texture emerging through the digital story, which synchronously captured a nostalgic air.

My choice of space, positioning and tensions created between the lighting and objects inside the cupboard and audio at the back, was to engage the viewer in a feeling of empowerment, in nostalgic childhood memories of loved ones and fantasies of imaginary places and spaces.

Looking at the work and elucidating the tensions, I became conscious that indeed the music and digital story had reinforced the power of nostalgia in bringing the past to the present. The power of this work lay in its function to inform the present, thus moving the practice forward. I also became conscious of this work's relationship to the artist books and wedding dress, understanding the symbolic connection between the Perspex pulpit and artist books, as a holding space of energies thus transferring this notion to the cupboard as an empowering validation. Furthermore, the installation also represented intangible emotions and nebulous concepts such as the artist books and wedding dress. They were multisensory, multidimensional and ephemeral but not immersive. This created a metaphorical vision, able to be seen, heard, sensed but not able to be interacted with in a physical sense. This is the basis for my next evaluative discussion.

A number of viewers commented that this installation reminded them of past relatives who were positive influences in their lives and that they sensed the deeper

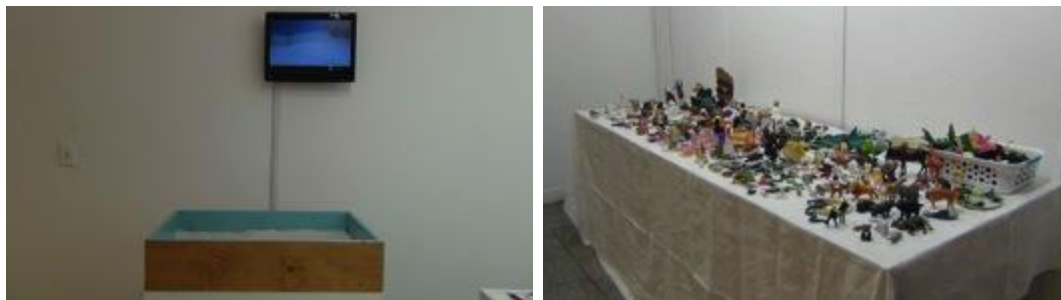


meaning in this work. Others contrasted it to the pilot exhibition, noting that now seeing it in this space they understood it much more clearly and its relationship to the other artworks.

### ***Personal and Collective Threads***

In contrast to the pilot exhibition, my specific intention for the *Personal and Collective Threads* installation was to be interactive. This is a significant milestone in mapping my journey. I was cognisant of the specific importance of space and placement for this interactive installation. I was also consciously aware that the other elements such as lighting, sound and images and objects were crucial for a meditative context for the viewer. This type of context was important so that the viewer could engage with the sand and latent qualities of the miniature figurines, in order to facilitate the understanding of their own story.

Installing this work, in a search for the 'right' intimate space, yet with room enough for both individual and interactive play, was a lengthy process in discussion, deliberation, experimentation and compromise. My intentions were to create a womb-like space that acted as an incubation place for the purpose of child-like play. I settled on the wall space in between *Validation* and the main entrance.



**Figure 55:** Susan Christie, *Personal and Collective Threads* (2014), Individual Tray, 60 x 80 x 20cm, sand, audio visual, Miniatures



**Figure 56:** Susan Christie, *Personal and Collective Threads* (2014), sand, 130cm diameter; pillows, collaborative space

Framed by the back wall space, installing this work revealed that the position provided a panoramic view looking back out onto the rest of the work. The work gave me a sense of looking out onto the ocean. The combination of ready-made objects appeared as a group. The large trestle table, lit from above, and covered in a white tablecloth, which reached to the floor, sat centre stage against the back wall. A diverse collection of miniature figurines in various categories sat on top (Figure 55). An individual sand tray stood on a large plinth in the corner space facing the sidewall (Figure 55). It was positioned so that the viewer could look up and watch a continuous documentary of one of my sand play processes. Foregrounded in the space between the table and the artists book formation, lay a circular atoll of sand, on the floor, with several pillows placed randomly to the side for participants to sit on (Figure 56). I drew metaphoric parallels to Stradbroke Island, intimating that the atoll was like my island place, surrounded by water and a place for play and peaceful reflection. The viewer when interacting in this space would have a child's perspective of the majority of the exhibition.

The miniature figurines were diverse in range, crossing levels of the material conscious world as well as the non-material unconscious world. They ranged in items such as trees, plants, stones, wild animals, men and women in every day activities, houses, ships and vehicles (Figure 57). They also included imaginative fantasy figures such as mythological and fairytale figures and religious figures from diverse cultures (Kalff 2003).

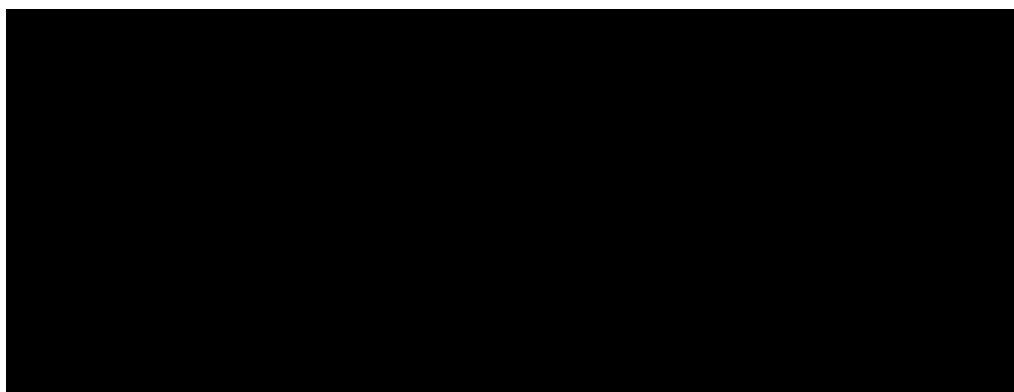


**Figure 57:** Susan Christie, *Sand play, Personal and Collective Threads* (2014), sample of miniatures (average height 7–15cm)

The significance of these miniature figurines is that they provide context for choice and decision-making. Essentially they present the psyche with a never-ending flow of dialogue, at different points in one's process, by repurposing them and transforming them into a symbolic form. These forms can then represent different aspects or transformations of the psyche in a never-ending interplay. This in turn contributes to the submergences and re-emergences of thought and form, like the ebb and flow of tides on the shoreline of consciousness.

I correlated this to the artists' vocation, of travelling the tide line exploring and investigating whatever the ocean throws up onto the shoreline, to use for transformation purposes. (PJ Harvey: *Cat Woman* 1999).

Like Beuys, I use this space to mediate with the audience through the sand, my objects, sound and lighting and through the ritual of play. In my mind this space is a revisiting of innocence, play, story and imagination in a more conscious cognisant way than previously experienced.



**Figure 58:** Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli, *The Last Supper* (1520), oil on canvas



**Figure 59:** Susan Christie, *Collective Threads* (2014),  
miniatures, table cloth; trestle table, 170 x 100cm

Viewing the work as a unit, I was struck how the centre table (Figure 59) appeared like the table in Rizzoli's *The Last Supper* (Figure 58). I recalled my mother saying that the white tablecloth belonged to my grandmother. I intend to create a child-like space, with all the accouterments of the ritual of play and story, but in doing so, I had created the context of a spiritual ritual as well, in the way I lay out my collection on this large trestle table with a pure linen tablecloth, as an offering to the audience. In effect I create a context with which the audience has the opportunity to explore on a deeper level, their spiritual and psychological landscape. I offer a window of opportunity for the audience through selection and choice to explore their own values

and self-realisations through the ritual of selection, play and meditation, thus offering the choice of reflection and exploration and the possibility of finding their own processes that could initiate their own rites of passage.

There are references to Da Vinci's *Last Supper* in the symbolic significance of the figurines and in the way I lay them out in categories on the table, such as the mystical, religious or natural, as well as the worldly everyday categories. The figures and narrative in *The Last Supper* mirrors the archetypal latent qualities that can be found in the miniature figurines and emphasises the connotation of Jung's collective unconscious. Namely each of these qualities are waiting to be awakened. The divine archetype of Christ is in the centre surrounded by the twelve apostles, who each represent and carry in varying degrees, the dual role of the shadow and spiritual teacher. Furthermore the interplay within the narrative reveals which archetypal mantle or role each disciple wears, thus revealing which aspect of the psyche as the narrative unfolds. I correlated this revelation to my miniature figurines and the contexts and atmosphere offered in this installation, where the potential of the figurines give the viewer a formal realisation of their internal world (Kalff 2003)

Audience members described that they felt drawn to and were fascinated with the diversity of the figurines and the sand tray. Several participated and felt relaxed with the process, mentioning that seeing the DVD, they felt that it gave them license to play. Only a few audience members interacted with the sand space on the floor, commenting that even though they were drawn to the space, they felt they had to ask permission to do so. They commented that it reminded them of their childhood, where they drew in the sand and dug tunnels and created little worlds allowing their imagination to roam freely.

In the 2013 exhibition, this installation was not set up interactively (Figure 60), yet my audience had made a connection to the tray and play, but not to my literal visual translation of the shoreline of consciousness.



**Figure 60:** Susan Christie, *Sand play – Personal and Collective Threads*, Pilot Exhibition (2013), sand, driftwood, pumice stone, flat tray, 120 x140cm

They had made the connection now in this final exhibition and I became conscious that my audience and I shared this shoreline alike. This was indeed our present shoreline, not the one of the past.

## Revelations

In surveying the exhibition space from my new found shoreline. I realised how the work in those in-between spaces had initially spoken to me intuitively and unconsciously. The dark and dissolving shoreline of the past was now bathed in a new light, engendering a more defined symbolic language and heightened self-awareness.

I realised through clarifying the unfolding process of installation, I drew parallels and referenced Forouhar's use of 'in-between spaces' to explore my own sense of disempowerment between my inner and outer worlds. I consciously realised what role each work played in the process of redefining my *Self* and my practice. Like Forouhar, I had used the space to emphasise and expand meanings and relationships between my works. I recognised these creative works as my symbolic traces from the residue of childhood, emotion and memory. Through the installation process of selection and placement, I realised how this exhibition space symbolically



acted as a birthing place for my creative practice, just as Stradbroke was my spiritual birthplace throughout my childhood transitions.

I felt my exhibition *Terra Incognita* was compositionally and aesthetically engaging. Using art forms that depicted narrative and ritual, I felt the placement of form and material visually spoke of transitions across time and spaces implying childhood play and imagination. Each work played its role in balancing the ambiguous feelings of disempowerment and empowerment through the metaphoric and symbolic images associated with death and rebirth. By using intuitive working processes I had recreated as described by Jung, a process of Individuation or Alchemy, as a way of liberating the past disempowerment by forging and making visible my inward struggle, empowering both *Self* and practice.

Furthermore, I was able to feel and experience, as an integrated whole, the visual flood of emotional energies and dialogue travelling in a circular formation throughout the main exhibition space (Figure 61). I realised now that my in-between space or what I referred to my abyss of nothingness, earlier in the work and the centre of the *Self* or inner *Self* referred to throughout are one and the same.



**Figure 61:** Susan Christie, *Terra Incognita: A Symbolic Mythical Journey*, Final Exhibition (2014)

## Conclusion

*“At the still point of the turning world...*

*Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,*

*Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,*

*There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.”*

– T.S. Eliot, *4 Quartets* (as quoted in Martin 1955, 185)

In the writing of my exegesis, I experienced the “intolerable wrestle between words and meaning” (T.S. Eliot as quoted in Martin 1955), however the continual deep commitment I have to the child, empowerment and *self* evolvement has been well served by my practice-led research and intuitive methodology. My intentions, upon reflection, were to show through theory and practice how empowerment could be achieved through intuition and intuitive methods. The practice has traced my cathartic and transformational journey by creating a rigorous space to explore on multidimensional levels and spaces, the memories and experiences of one of my most significant life events such as my child to adult transition. The practice enabled me to birth these transitions.

This research project and final exhibition, as a transitional rite of passage, is a culmination of many significant transitions, coloured by my initial childhood transition. It has provided me with much rich material as an artist and has manifested itself in different creative ways over the continuum of time.

Research into Jungian elements of the psyche, such as notions of the *Self*, processes of Individuation/Alchemy; mythical imagination and the child archetype and theories of sand play based on these Jungian elements, have informed my self-discovery. Campbell’s mythological interpretations enabled me to expand my ‘living myth’ to experience the metaphysical and express the spiritual in my practice.

The intuitive methods and processes found in sand play, such as amplification, active imagination, role-play and different forms of self-referencing both visual and written have enabled a continual reflective interplay between the *Self* and the practice. In drawing parallels between other artists work and my own, I expanded the



materials, forms and symbolic nature of my practice, which enabled shifts from two-dimensional to three-dimensional working processes.

The cyclic nature of my intuitive methodology brings to light the transitions and how intuition supports and enables the manifestation of symbolic art forms therefore bringing self-knowledge to consciousness through my art. Research into theories of creativity and Vygotsky's notion of aesthetic catharsis revealed the social interplay between artist, art form and audience. This informed my self-discovery on yet another level between *Self*, art form and audience through the installation process taking my practice to another transition.

The installation process has been an important one for me. The experience and discussion of the installation process has given me insight into the interactive dynamics between *Self*, art form and audience. The process of installation has been a potent negotiation of representing and understanding my transformative struggles between disempowerment and empowerment. Upon these reflections of the installation process and its role, I am cognisant of being taken to yet another level of discourse between material, object, my psyche and the collaborative nature of the audience's ongoing reflexive engagement. I realise the potential qualities and power of the art form and object as symbolic, presenting enormous possibilities for shifts in perception, empowerment and transformation through spiritual self-discovery. The two works that I feel strongly represented pivotal points in the practice were firstly, the artist's books and the wedding dress, which created personal transformational changes for my *Self* and practice and secondly, *Personal and Collective Threads* which provided the audience with the interactive experience in effect creating a context of change for the audience. These art forms highlighted and demonstrated my ability to create emotionally and spiritually effective art forms.

I realised, by making visible my inward struggle, I am re-enacting yet another transition and transformation of my lived experience, thereby giving substance to the ephemeral evolutionary nature of significant life experiences and my practice. Essentially the manifestation of these forms through intuitive processes has created an endoskeleton for both my inner child and my practice.

This journey has been an extremely transformative, empowering and highly significant one for strengthening personal and artistic values, as it has validated my inner *Self*-knowledge. The cross disciplinary and multidimensional nature of my practice enables me to develop and integrate my inner child, which, by its nature, enables the further evolution of my *Self* and the creative practice. This evolution is achieved by the focus on my personal and authentic ways of interpretation and implementing intuition, ritual, play, imagination and story to make art forms.

My practice-led research has brought about new found knowledge and given me insights, which I have now developed into a subsequent proposal with respect to how I can further this project for community engagement. There is great value in creative exploration of intuition, imagination, play and narrative involving the reconfiguration and empowerment of *Self*. The fostering of creativity using the methods I have outlined potentially makes way for new knowledge and innovation. Practice-led research has provided me with a powerful outcome because interpretation signals the responsibility of *Self* and allows attention to be focused on the inherent way we build and construct meaning itself (Mafe 2010). I can foresee the potential to impact the individual and social community as a whole.

This project highlights the importance of intuition in creativity and innovation, the creative practice for empowerment and transformation and brings forth the refinement and maturation of my aesthetic processes and methods with the enthusiasm and anticipation of taking new knowledge of these methods into new territories for explorations in my creative practice.

I have addressed questions such as, how can intuition and the art form be used for transitioning significant life events? How can art be used for creation of self-acceptance, which potentially leads to the acceptance of difference in others? As my work grows and evolves, no doubt it will continue to mirror my life's journey and continually raise questions about purpose, meaning and spiritual self-discovery.

## Appendices

## Appendix A: Fairytale: The Woman with Hair of Gold

Reprinted in: Pinkola Estes, Clarissa. 1993. *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Contacting the Power of the Wild Woman*, 378. London: Rider.

There was a very strange but beautiful woman with long golden hair as fine as spun gold. She was poor and without mother or father, and lived in the woods alone and wove upon a loom made of black walnut boughs. A brute who was the son of the coal burner tried to force her into marriage, and in an effort to buy him off, she gave him some of her golden hair.

But he did not know or care that it was spiritual, not monetary, gold that she gave him, so when he sought to trade her hair for merchandise in the marketplace, people jeered at him and thought him mad.

Enraged, he returned by night to the woman's cottage and killed her with his hands and buried her body by the river. For a long time no one noticed that she was missing. No one inquired of her hearth or health. But in her grave, the woman's hair grew and grew. The beautiful hair curled and spiraled upward through the black soil, and it grew looping and twirling more and more, and up and up, until her grave was covered by a field of swaying golden reeds.

Shepherds cut the curly reeds to make flutes, and when they played them, the tiny flutes sang and would not stop singing.

*Here lies the woman with golden hair  
Murdered and in her grave,  
Killed by the son of the coal burner  
Because she wished to live.*

And that is how the man who took the life of the woman with golden hair was discovered and brought to justice so that those who live in the wild woods of the world, like we ourselves do, were safe again once more.

## Appendix B: Mythical Interpretation

This is an allegorical interpretation by Joseph Campbell, *The Hero's Adventure* (pp 153-54) in *The Power of the Myth*.

*“...is that of Nietzsche in Thus Spake Zarathustra. In a kind of parable, Nietzsche describes what he calls the three transformations of the spirit. The first is that of the camel, of childhood and youth. The camel gets down on his knees and says, ‘Put a load on me.’ This is the season for obedience, receiving instruction and the information your society requires of you in order to live a responsible life.”*

But when the Camel is well loaded, it struggles to its feet and runs out into the desert, where it is transformed into a Lion – the heavier the load that’s been carried, the stronger the Lion will be. Now the task of the lion is to kill a Dragon (This is the combination of the Snake and the Bird, symbolising change (transformation and freedom) – but in this sense the Dragon (western Dragon) is called “Thou Shalt”. On every scale of this scaly beast is “Thou Shalt Not” is imprinted – some from 4,000 years ago, and others from this morning’s headlines.

Whereas the Camel, The Child, had to submit to the “thou shalts”, the Lion, the Youth is to throw them off and come to his own realisations. And so when the Dragon is thoroughly dead, with all its “thou shalts” overcome, the Lion is transformed into a child moving out of its own nature, like a wheel impelled from its own hub. No rules to obey. No more rules derived from the historical needs and tasks of the local society, but the pure impulse to living of a life in flower”.

Now the “thou shalts” that are being shed are the ones that inhibit his self-fulfillment.

“For the camel the “thou shalt” is a most civilising force. It converts the human animal into a civilised human being. But the period of youth is the period of self-discovery and transformation into a lion. The rules are now to be used at will for life, not submitted to as compelling “thou shalts”.

Something of this kind has to be recognised, for example by a serious student of art. Apprenticed to the Master to study and learn the techniques – you diligently follow all

the instructions, the Master puts upon you, but then comes the time for using the rules in your own way and not being bound by them, that's the time for the lion deed. You can actually forget the rules because they have been assimilated. You are an artist. Your own innocence now is of one who has become an artist, who has been transmuted. You don't behave as the person who has never mastered an art."

## **Appendix C: Stream of Consciousness (narrative)**

**September 2012** – ATN-RESEARCH: Practice-Led Research in Creative Arts, Media and Design (planned prior and during the online course).

There once was a little girl living a little girls life, whirling and twirling her way through her childhood, when unforeseen forces acted upon her always creeping up and up on her when she least expected it, buffeting and tossing her, still whirling and twirling along the cliff edges of life.

She felt so alone and wished for help in some form – it came in form of a boat – a beautiful boat –decorated with gold and carved intricately in dark wood – she climbs in and the ocean took her across many seas, she saw many things and she would often come to shore and whirl and twirl along the cliff face and all the while she collected things – things that made her feel good, some were helpful and others were not and dragged her down.

Every time she visited a place she would collect something from her experience. However she found her clothes (skirt) dress was getting heavier and heavier as she grew older and then one day with a large storm brewing as storms do when your out on the ocean, she fell out of the boat and went tumbling down, down, down with the weight of her dress to the ocean floor. She felt the weightlessness, but also at the same time frightened she wouldn't be able to breathe – as she was looking around and discarding some of her weight, she found these beautiful bubbles on the ocean floor, they were glistening and smiling at her and begging her to take them all to hold onto so they could take her to the surface...so she grabbed hold of the biggest bubble and thrust a few of others under her arms and in her clothing and they transported her to the surface and as she was coming closer and closer to the surface she felt something happening to her body,...

The bubbles brought her to the surface and then all of a sudden she felt herself floating in the air – she could see the ocean below her and the land before her and there was her boat!

In her boat was a stone with strange language on it. As she was looking at the stone, she wondered how she could get to the boat again and she became aware of and

realised that she had wings like an angel. She found she could float, soar and dive and so dive she did down to the boat and picked up the stone with the strange language on it and flew about the land until she came to a familiar landscape of which she knew – a landscape of her childhood days, with cliffs and ocean and breeze and she then found her sacred place within the rocks and deposited the stone there with many other stones with different languages on them for this was the place wherein peace and abundance/growth resides.

## **Reflection**

This is a link to the cupboard, link to the Fairytale and the Dress.

After writing this and reading it again, I realised I had the cupboard for a reason, there is where the (memory stones) all the stones collective & personal will reside in that cupboard – because the cupboard was my Great Grandma's and my Grandma's – and that is a safe place for the original stone and the stone image in the paintings with the language painted in layers under that surface.



## **Appendix D: Active Imagination Dialogue**

**(with my Child Spirit, prior to the Pilot Exhibition July 2013)**

[The headings; Separation; Struggle and Return and Reintegration have been added later in reflection]

**Who are you?**

*I am your child spirit – I am your other Self.*

**How old are you?**

*I'm a young girl in her teens on the edge of the teens.*

**Where are you going?**

*I'm going to find the sacred place far away and make it my own and gain my own freedom.*

### **The Separation**

**Why – where have you come from?**

*My great earth mother cast me aside in anger I was thrown in that boat you see – I felt safe though but very afraid and had no idea where I was going – the storm was frightening and I was cast out into the ocean with only the clothes I had on – this skirt, which is heavily decorated with my wounding's. This boat was my home for days, months or even years I cant remember.*

**Well, if it was years, you would be older?**

*No, I am your child spirit, I stayed the same while - time means nothing*

**What about the bird?**

*Yes, well, the bird gave me comfort as he was watching over me, birds can move between sky and water easily and they migrate across oceans guided by the seasons. They look down upon the earth and us human spirits.*

### **Well, where were you going? – Your boat seemed to know?**

*I didn't know – that boat bobbed around on the surface of the ocean and I was just being thrown around by the elements when I was thrown on shore in this far away land – it was so mountainous – I climbed the cliffs to see where I was – but the ocean kept drawing and calling me to its depths. The more I whirled and twirled along that cliffs edge avoiding the song of the depths of the ocean (for I knew somehow it held the secret to that sacred place and my freedom) the heavier my skirt became. I could feel the pull down to the ocean the longer I stayed and resisted, until one day I thought I could see something glistening in the water so I jumped from the cliffs into the water forgetting about my skirt, which tried to drag me down to the bottom.*

*I was so afraid as I was floating downwards, because I couldn't breathe and I was so alone – the terror was consuming me and then I realised that all the bubbles that I was forming from withholding my breath were surrounding me and I looked up from underneath my watery grave and saw the bird circling into the light and I knew if I formed a big enough bubble I could breathe and be transported back to the surface.*

### **What did the bird represent to you?**

*It reminded me of my grandmother who helped me grow my gifts of creativity, and how she was there for me when I was little, and even now is there for me in death. It reminded me of my great grandmother of her great strengths in enduring the sadness's of life, her sense of adventure and travel and taking risks into the unknown.*

### **So when you surfaced – how did you feel after your ordeal and you realised that you had these strengths as well?**

*I felt like stronger – I felt I wasn't so alone and I had the strength within me to save myself. But I still had my skirt and I still hadn't found my sacred place, which contained the secret to my freedom.*

## **From the Wounded to the Magical – The Struggle & Return**

### **So what did you do then?**

*I knew I had to return – to the ocean – but I didn't want to and I didn't want to let go my skirt it had been my protection for so long – but the urge to find my sacred place was overpowering*

**So how did you do that?**

*I took my boat, which has part of the code of the secret language that I have to decipher before I can access the sacred place and make it my own.*

*Then I returned to the ocean and let the skirt take me down to the dark shadowy places in the ocean – I had never seen before – I was so afraid, so afraid – I knew I had the boat and the bubble but as I descended down the different levels I felt the fear of those dark places and couldn't go on – but I remembered my grandma & her love and my great grandma and her strength and finally in the last stage I found the stone at the bottom with the secret language and I knew I could then find the sacred place - I just had to decipher it and bring it up to the surface and the light.*

*When I looked up I could see where I came from – I suddenly felt so light, my skirt had gone and I drifted seamlessly in my bubble to the surface and there was my boat waiting for me – I placed the stone in the boat and then looked out and saw a place that seemed so familiar...a place of my youth and of other children like me, and I saw them playing in the sand and I knew then I could share this journey and sacred place and secret language with them.*

## **Appendix E: Sand Play Instructions**

It is easier for meditative play, to have one person at a time at the tray and no more than two people in the floor area.

- Make yourself comfortable in front of or on the sand.
- Close your eyes and take several deep breaths slowly in and out
- Relax and empty your mind, free your mind from all the stresses of the day
- When you are ready, go up to the miniatures and intuitively choose a selection to take to the tray or play area
- You may like to run your hands through the sand or just lightly touch the sand or draw in the sand before you place your miniatures in the tray. There is no set way to begin.
- When you feel you have finished your play or story, feel free to take a picture of your tray so that you may reflect upon your story at a later time.
- The ritual of cleaning the miniatures and returning them back to their place, gives a feeling of completion of the process.

– Susan Christie

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